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*THE EAVESDROPPER.*

*AN UNPARALLELED EXPERIENCE.*

PART II.

CHAPTER I.

A DOMESTIC IDYLL.

UPON the whole, everything had gone well for the amusement I had promised myself, not indeed of 'seeing ourselves as others see us' (for nobody *could* see me), but of hearing myself spoken of as others heard. The two doctors, it was true, had hardly spoken of me at all, confound them; but my personal friends would of course express themselves on that interesting subject with candour and *abandon*. What fun it would be! What a touchstone it would afford of the genuineness of their regard, of which, however, I had no reason to entertain a doubt. Upon looking back on a long and well spent life, I had really nothing, to speak of, to be ashamed of. (There were things here and there, it is true, but as I have just observed, *not* things to speak of.) I was become a sort of Asmodeus, though of course I could not take the roofs of people's houses off, which would, moreover, have been an invasion of the sanctities of domestic life. I was not, I flattered myself, a person to abuse my position as he did. My friends could trust me, though the usual addition, 'as far as they could see me,' was in my case superfluous.

I say everything had gone well for my little scheme, for the nurse had been warned not to put herself in a state of anxiety

about any disappearances on my part, and could comfort herself with the conviction that I should presently turn up somewhere, though it might be in a very unexpected place. She had had, however, enough, poor thing, as I reflected with my usual consideration, of hide-and-seek for that day, and moreover I was rather exhausted. Light as I was, I had had to hop about with a great deal of agility, and after nine weeks of illness (including moreover some 'wandering') I was a little tired with my exertions. However, Mr. Scratchwig would have been right *now* in saying 'You are better, sir,' for the doctors' visit had (as indeed it ought to have done at six pounds six) done me a great deal of good. It had given me 'tone,' a thing very highly valued by all educated persons, or at all events by all persons in the educational line of business. A healthy glow, with a little moisture in it, suffused me. As for those 'ten days' Mr. Scratchwig had given me, I, so to speak, threw the gift in his face, like a too cheap present. I felt I was going to be a blessing to mankind for a protracted period.

My mind was full of kindly thoughts. I even wondered how Cousin Dick and the rest of them were getting on, and forgave (or at least forgot) his desperate though futile attempt to deprive me of Uncle Theodore's legacy. He was living in some unfashionable part of town, doubtless a prey to remorse.

Then my mind reverted to Angelina Spiffkins, a ridiculous name, which I had generously entertained the notion of changing for her. Old Spiffkins—dear me, why did I say old? Like most convalescents, I had obviously thought myself better than I really was, or I should never have used such an adjective. My brain was not in its normal state. Old Spiffkins was no older than myself, and perhaps even a little younger. He had called and left his card at the beginning of my illness, 'with kind inquiries from self and daughter.' It was rather a commercial phrase, no doubt, but then he *was* commercial. A great traveller, though he didn't belong to the Travellers' Club. People had warned me against marrying beneath me. Pooh, pooh! Angelina was very young, and still growing. Take fifteen from fifty-five, and what remains? The difference was not worth thinking about.

What did the divine Shakespeare, to whom I had just become indebted for the Great Secret, say about that?

'Let still the woman take an elder than herself.' He doesn't say how much, but presumably the elder the better. (He had

tried the other way himself, as we know, and found it a complete failure.) If merely to have a husband to love is a satisfaction to a young person, to be able to look up to him as a father (or even a grandfather), also, must be her ideal indeed. There was, it was true, some young man in the War Office—the nearest approach to the military she could get—on whom Angelina was supposed to be sweet, and who on one occasion had been exceedingly rude to me; but I would not think of him now. I would only think of Angelina by herself—or with *myself*.

Then there were my friends at the Club—Rawlings, Dashwood, Seymour, and the rest; how amusing it would be to be with them, as it were, and yet not *of* them. How often we write to friends in foreign parts (to whom one never knows what to say, they are so completely 'out of it'), 'I am always with you in the spirit.' Well, now this was really going to happen. We four generally used to lunch together at the Club, and I made up my mind to make one of the party, to-morrow.

Accordingly, as soon as I had had my beef tea and so on, next morning, I felt pretty fit, and said to the nurse, 'If you'll leave me alone till I ring the bell, I think I could get a nice long sleep.'

She shook her head and murmured something about 'once bit, twice shy.'

'No, nurse,' I said (for I hate hypocrisy), '*you're* not shy. (Nor, I believe—not to speak of 'twice'—had she ever been.) You needn't be nervous about me, or, if you are, you can just take a little stimulant. Doctor's orders, you know, and you do sometimes, don't you? Let me have my way and you have yours, and let us say nothing about either of them to anybody. Come, be off.'

I was sorry to have to speak in such a menacing manner to a female, but it was absolutely necessary, because I was going to get up.

She trotted off like a lamb, taking her sherry with her. I took a dose of my magic mixture, dressed myself, put a lump of sugar in my pocket, for emergencies, and shimmered downstairs. As I stopped in the hall for my hat and umbrella, I heard voices in the study. Was it possible more doctors had come? The door was ajar, and I pushed it open and slipped in. In my favourite chair was sitting my confidential servant Welsford (the most respectable *looking* man I ever saw), and on the footstool beside him sat the housemaid. With one hand he held my

morning paper, which he was reading aloud to her, and with the other he 'toyed with the tangles of Jemima's hair.' They were engaged, I knew, but I had never seen them so particularly so. It was quite an idyll—and they would probably have justified it, on the ground that during their master's illness they had nothing else to do. Still they should not have done it in the study.

'This I think, Jemima my own,' he was just saying, 'will suit us to a T.' Then he read out of the paper, in a voice broken with emotion, or other causes, '*Pretty Village Public, with Fly business attached; genuine home; neat garden, piggeries, stabling; sound living; spirits free; sacrifice through domestic affairs. Only 100l. cash down. Same hands thirteen years. Rare chance. Apply early.*'

'What do you think of that, eh, my darling?'

'It sounds beautiful, Thomas, especially the "genuine home." But I don't understand it quite all. What do they mean by "sound living"?''

What indeed? If Thomas could explain that to her—and me—I made up my mind to forgive him everything.

'Well, a sound living, Jemima my own,' he answered, 'is of course a sound living; they could not say a living sound, you know, that would be nonsense. Here it is again, in another publican's advertisement, and here again.'

'But what does it *mean*, Thomas?'

She was resolute as well as importunate. The poor man knew, as well as I did, that to confess his ignorance would be fatal to his future prospects. She would no longer look up to him as she was certainly doing now. She would say to herself 'What's the use of askin' Thomas anythink?' The perspiration stood upon his manly brow.

'It's a term used in the trade, my darlin',' he answered desperately. 'When you're a landlady—and a very pretty one you'll make—you will know all about it. But I can't tell you till we're married. It wouldn't be proper.'

'Lawk a mercy!' said Jemima.

He had accomplished his object; it was impossible that she could question him on that point any further; but the effort had been almost beyond his powers. I felt that it would have been quite beyond mine, and forgave him everything.

'Then there's "spirits free,"' she continued; 'what does that



mean? It does not mean, surely, that you will get your gin and brandy for nothing, *as you do now?*'

I didn't like those last words, which her tone seemed to put in italics, at all. What *did* she mean? I wondered.

'No, no, lovey. "Spirits free" means—well, the spirits in such an eligible public cannot of course help being free. It is "the Fly business attached" that does it. Then think of the "piggeries and the stabling," he went on hurriedly, "and the sacrifice through domestic affairs;" why that neat garden must be a perfect Heden, and oh! how 'appy me and my Heve will be in it! Won't us?'

Here ensued a love passage, not inappropriate as an illustration to those "spirits free" Mr. Welsford had so poetically explained.

"Same hands thirteen years?" continued the persevering Jemima. 'Why in the name of goodness should they expect otherwise? There's nothing to boast about in that! Why, I've had the same hands for thir—I mean for nearly five-and-twenty years.'

'No, no, Jemima. What they mean is that the country air about that inn is so clean and bright that there is not a speck of dirt about it. "Same hands for thirteen years" means that they have never had to wash their hands during all that time.'

'Nasty creatures; they ought to have washed 'em, whether they wanted it or whether they didn't,' exclaimed Jemima with just indignation.

He would fain have assuaged it as before, but at present she was evidently less bent upon blandishments than business.

'Then there's the "100*l.* cash down," Thomas, which I fear will prove the greatest puzzle of all to us.'

'Well, you see, we've got a little money of our own, Jemima dear.'

'I have got a little money of *my* own,' was the dry rejoinder; 'you lost yours over the last Derby.'

The reminder made the respectable Welsford's mouth twitch as though it were bridled with bit and curb, and he had been suddenly pulled up.

'But *then*, my dearest darlin',' he murmured persuasively.

'All the same *when*? A hundred years hence, of course it will, if that's what you mean. I don't understand you.'

‘But surely, dear, when we’re wedded—“With all my worldly goods”—no, I don’t mean that exactly, but what is mine will then be yours, and what is yours will be mine. It’s in the Service.’

‘Then we’ll be wedded at the Register,’ was the calm reply. My admiration for *Jemima*, with her good sense and unswerving resolution (notwithstanding her shaky position on the footstool) exceeded even that I entertained for her beloved object. If she had told him she meant to take advantage of the Married Woman’s Property Act I should not have been the least surprised. What an insight had my marvellous gift afforded me into the growing intelligence of the lower orders! What a master of fence (in dialectics) had the man proved himself to be! What a miracle of prudence the maid!

‘Well, as it happens, it doesn’t signify, *Jemima* my own,’ he continued after a longish pause. ‘I might as well let you into a little secret, which I had intended to be a pleasant surprise to you; but since all will then be bliss you will never miss it. Master is going to provide for me.’

Here was news indeed. I listened with as great curiosity as *Jemima* herself for what was coming.

‘Master is not half a bad fellow notwithstanding what people say, and now that he is growing near his end he’s softening.’

‘That’s what I heard the cook telling her policeman,’ observed *Jemima*. ‘I can’t abide the woman, and wouldn’t demean myself by asking questions of her, but I understood her to say as his brain was going.’

‘Pooh, pooh, not a bit of it. Don’t you believe a word about his being queer in his mind. It’s only his heart as is softening. “Welsford,” he says the other day, when I went up to ast after him, “I’m not long for this world, and I shall be ‘appier, in leaving it, to feel as you are provided for. Wills are chancey things which people are sometimes wicked enough to disturb.”’

‘He was thinking of how he got his own money, I suppose,’ remarked *Jemima* simply; ‘I have heard cook say that it was touch and go with him because he inherited something from his uncle besides the property.’

How people talk even below stairs! The idea of Cousin Dick’s abominable contention having permeated even to my own kitchen! Good Welsford, however, at once took up the cudgels for me.

‘Never you mind so long as it wasn’t “go,” *Jemima*, and I

do beg that you will put away from your mind, for both our sakes, the notion of master having anything the matter with his. "Wills are chancey things," said he, "so when I am gone I authorise you to take out of my desk five twenty-pound notes you'll find there."

They *were* there, though I didn't know he knew it; to that limited extent he was telling the truth.

"You've been a good and faithful servant, Welsford," he says, "and you're going to marry a good girl as will be a credit to you. What with her money and yours you'll be able to take a nice little public-house together, and live happily every afterwards." And then, as if overcome with a picture that could never be realised in his own case, poor old bloke, he wept.'

'Lawk a mercy!' exclaimed Jemima. 'Then he's a good sort after all.'

This reflection so inclined this young person to tenderness and affection that I felt it would be treason to the best instincts of our nature to remain a witness to their exhibition. Moreover, if I was to meet my friends at the Club there was now little time to lose. In the hall, however, I was attracted by strange sounds coming up the kitchen stairs, something like the chirruping of birds. There was also a man's voice, though speaking in muffled tones. Was it possible at so early an hour that thieves—But here I caught sight of a blue uniform. It was not thieves, but quite the contrary: it was cook's policeman. I could now leave the house with confidence, and, to judge by what I had heard from Jemima and Welsford, with the comforting reflection that the improvidence of the lower classes had been very much exaggerated.

## CHAPTER II.

### TRAVELLING UNDER DIFFICULTIES.

THERE is nothing easier, one would say, than for a gentleman who has money in his pocket to go from Bayswater to Pall Mall any summer day on wheels, but then no one has tried it, except myself, who has been invisible. I might *call* a cab of course, but that would only provoke anger from the driver, and perhaps get innocent persons, falsely suspected of a practical joke, into serious trouble. Walking, in my feeble state, was of course out of the

question, and nothing remained for me but an omnibus. I have known people to wish themselves invisible when making use of this humble mode of conveyance, but my case was precisely the opposite; I wanted the conductor to see me and stop. However, he stopped for a fat old lady, and stepping lightly up before her I seated myself on the knifeboard. Of course I couldn't go inside. It might have filled up, and the man have let in a thirteenth passenger to sit on *me*.

There were two very young men on my left, who conversed in a low voice together, but of course I could hear everything they said. They looked grave and respectable beyond their years. One was evidently a curate of the Church of England, and the other I took to be connected with missionary enterprise.

Amusement was clearly out of their line, and indeed they were going to an oratorio at the Crystal Palace. It was very strange that though they were Englishmen, I could scarcely understand one word they said. They used such funny terms: 'brads,' and 'dibbs,' and 'mopuses,' and 'posh,' and 'stumpy.' At first I thought they were musical expressions, the notes of the gamut for all I knew. But at last it was borne in upon me that they were talking about money. 'Can you smash a thick un for me?' inquired one, handing his friend a sovereign. 'You're sure it ain't sheen?' returned the other, with a diabolical grin, and then produced from his coat pocket (mixed with some things that certainly ought not to have been there, including a false nose) the change for the coin.

It is dreadful to write it, but I had been listening for the last quarter of an hour to thieves' slang. 'It was only now and then that it became intelligible. Presently we passed a most respectable and very stout old lady carrying a fur bag, with no doubt her purse in it, as is the artless custom of old ladies. The eyes of both my young friends were attracted to her at once; for youth and beauty they cared nothing, but only for solid worth.

'Do you think there's any flimsies in that old gal's bag, Jack? I fancy she'd run to a quid or two!'

He must have had a very lively fancy to imagine her running to anything, or even away from it.

The other consulted his watch, or, as was more probable, somebody else's watch, and shook his head. 'It's ten to one there's nothing but wedge (silver) in her bag and a laced wipe, and we should miss the blooming oratorio.'

It was only too clear that I was sitting cheek by jowl with a couple of pickpockets! I was greatly shocked of course by this discovery, but it is curious how one's indignation at crime is mitigated by the reflection that the criminals cannot injure oneself. The absentee landlord is furious at his tenantry not paying their rents, but less moved than his agent by their habit of shooting from behind hedges at persons obnoxious to them. I knew these gentlemanly young men could not pick my pockets, nor even dream of such a thing, and I should have quietly sat by their side, notwithstanding what is said at the police courts about 'a companion of thieves,' all the way to Waterloo Place but for a most frightful incident. Another passenger was coming up the stairs, and would infallibly take my place!

If I had been well and agile, I might have dodged him, as Punch eludes his persecutors in the show, and he have been never the wiser, but I really didn't feel up to it. Moreover the shock of his approach had demoralised me (much more than the other), and I could only think of getting off that infernal omnibus as quietly as possible. I scrambled over the knifeboard on to the other side, laying my hand mechanically on the shoulder of the nearest thief as I did so. I never shall forget his look of shrinking horror. The wicked fleeth when no man pursueth. He doubtless thought he was 'wanted' for something or other.

Then I ran down the other steps with a threepenny piece in my hand. Integrity (whatever my cousins may say) is one of my leading characteristics, and besides I quite forgot how easily I could have got off—literally got off—without paying my fare; but honesty was certainly not the best policy in my case. 'Here's your money, my man,' I said, as I pressed it into his palm and left the bus. He dropped clean off his perch, like a parrot in a fit, but fell into the muddy road. I had no time to wait to see what happened, but it is probable that his story was not believed; and yet when that poor man said 'When that threepenny piece was put into my hand by nobody, I'm blest if you mightn't have knocked me down with a feather,' he was speaking the literal truth, for that was just my weight, and I had done it.

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## CHAPTER III.

## THE CLUB.

I COULD hardly push the heavy swing door of the club open, and of course the commissionaire did not offer to do it for me. 'What a wind there must be outside!' growled the hall porter, who, sitting in his glass case all day—a mere exhausted receiver of letters and visiting cards—knows nothing whatever concerning the world without, not even its weather. I sat down on the bench reserved for messengers, to recover myself a little. A lady entered the hall, young but not very pretty, and with a tightness about her mouth, like a purse with the snap closed, that seemed to bespeak a resolute purpose.

'Are there any letters for Mr. Jones to-day, porter?' she inquired, with laboured sweetness.

'Which Mr. Jones, ma'am? There's a dozen on 'em.'

'Mr. Valentine Jones.'

Over the impassive face of that stately porter there crept a dry, wise smile, cynical and yet kindly; the smile of a man who knows the weaknesses of his fellow-creatures, but also shares them.

'There are several business letters, ma'am, for Mr. Valentine Jones.'

That word 'business' was, I felt, dictated by a generous nature, or at least by the recollection of some generosity (of Jones's); but if he had even said 'circulars' it would not have appeased that determined female.

'Give them to me, please,' she answered quietly, at the same time opening a little bag for their reception. 'He has sent me for them.'

'Quite impossible,' said the porter.

'But I am Mr. Valentine Jones's *wife*;' the stress she laid upon that last word cannot be reproduced in words.

'*Absolutely* impossible,' returned the official; and the stress he laid upon the first word was quite as intense.

She retired without a syllable, but looking volumes—and by no means of light literature.

The next incomer had a Milesian brogue, sweet and strong as rum punch, of which it also somehow reminded one; but yet he looked artful.

'Is Mr. O'Milligan, of Milligan Castle, county Blarney, and Member of Parliament, within?' he inquired.

'No, sir.'

'Then kindly favour me with his private address in town.'

'Hasn't got one, sir.'

The stranger scratched his head, whistled, winked, and softly withdrew.

A smile broadened on that stately porter's face; I wondered what he was laughing at. Some people (though rarely those who live in glass houses) see jokes in everything, which is a very deplorable state of mind.

I entered the ground floor reading-room, just to see how things were going in one's absence, and how it was borne by one's acquaintance. It seemed to be borne admirably well; I could not suspect them of indifference, but attributed their apparent stoicism to resignation—their not saying a word about me to an unwillingness to lacerate each other's bosoms by alluding to so painful a subject. Midas was asleep on the sofa, as usual, and little Mole patiently waiting for his waking that he might get one of the many newspapers with which the other had made his bed. Simpkins was standing with his back to the fireplace (from which in winter he keeps the glow from many a shivering fellow-creature), playing with his heavy gold watchchain, and reading a morning paper. It was a paragraph about himself, I knew, and, as some would think, a highly complimentary one; yet it had been written by the man who knew most about him in all the world.

The sporting men were whispering their dark secrets to one another in their customary corner. I bet myself, occasionally, and had won money of them; they would surely speak of me with respectful tenderness. I shimmered up to them in hopes to catch a word of sympathy. They were talking, not about 'men and books,' but about horses and books. One of them asked 'How about the Cork?' I hear he's gone back in the betting.' 'Yes,' said another; 'I've bet two to one against his recovery. If he's "scratched" it will not be the first time I have lost money by him;' and then they all laughed; not one word about *me*. So vanish friendships made on the race-course. However, these were not my own familiar friends, such as I was about to meet at luncheon.

I shimmered into the great dining-room; at our favourite



table Rawlings was already seated—first, as usual; if there is any delicacy on the bill, and only a little of it, he likes to make sure of it. He has not much appetite, poor fellow—‘coats of the stomach not what they should be,’ he tells us, confidentially; but, as Seymour says (who is a joker, and rather unfeeling), he makes up for it by his drinketite. He has his bottle of champagne before him. Immediately opposite is *my* chair, turned back to show the place is reserved. This touches me; these are friends indeed; they don’t know when I may be coming back (if ever), but they are always prepared, it seems, for my reception. Emotion so overpowered me that, forgetting my peculiar position, I turned back the chair and sat down on it. Rawlings’ cheerful face at once became livid. He stared at me so earnestly that I almost thought he could see something—an idea which, as it happened, also occurred to him. He murmured something to himself—some orison learnt in infancy, and in disuse for fifty years. Then, ‘Waiter,’ he exclaimed, ‘take away this champagne!’

‘Is it corked, sir?’

‘Hush! don’t say that,’ he cried, in tones of inexplicable alarm. ‘Never mention that word to me again.’

I had never seen Rawlings so bad as this—in the middle of the day—and I was anxious to see what our friends would think of it. Dashwood and Seymour came in together, and took their seats, the one with severe complacency, as usual, as though the whole world belonged to him, and its inhabitants were his slaves, the other with a careless indifference (also as usual), as though he didn’t care one halfpenny whom it belonged to.

‘Hullo, old man! off your feed?’ exclaimed Dashwood, pointing to the knife and fork, which my *vis-à-vis* had flung down upon his cutlet.

‘And, what is much worse, off his drink,’ observed Seymour. ‘Where’s your champagne, old fellow?’

‘Something has just happened,’ said Rawlings, in awe-struck tones. ‘The most curious and dreadful thing. Heaven knows what it means. I wish you would give me your attention, Dashwood,’ he murmured, imploringly.

‘All right; but a man must have his lunch, you know. (Yes, a slice of ham from the thick end.) Well, what was it?—(and some fat, mind I have some *fat*)—Well?’

‘Not five minutes ago, as I was sitting here alone, opposite to Banquo’s chair, as Seymour calls it, which was then turned

back—upon my life and honour I am telling you the exact truth——’

‘Stop a minute,’ interrupted Dashwood; ‘this is from the knuckle, waiter; I said the *thick* end—a thousand pardons; you were going to tell us the exact truth about something.’

‘It will have all the charm of novelty,’ said Seymour.

‘Don’t laugh at me,’ exclaimed Rawlings, earnestly; ‘if it had happened to either of *you*, you wouldn’t have laughed. I believe Dashwood would have gone off in a fit.’

‘Don’t talk like that even in jest, Rawlings,’ said Dashwood, who is of full habit and very nervous; ‘don’t *tell* it me if it’s dangerous, I beg.’

‘It will not be so dangerous as the fat of that ham, I’ll bet a shilling,’ said Seymour, pointing to the plate arrived for the second time.

‘Quite true,’ replied Dashwood; ‘many thanks to you for calling my attention to it. When I said “fat,” waiter, I did not mean a pound of fat.’

‘Upon my life,’ cried Rawlings, with tears in his eyes, ‘this is most *shocking*. I wish to relate the most painful, the most terrible experience that ever occurred to any human being—an intimation, it may be, from the other world—and you keep talking of ham.’

‘One must lunch,’ pleaded Dashwood, mournfully; ‘*this* world, which has at least the advantage of priority, demands it. I should like some fried potatoes; but that, of course, is out of the question till you have done your story—Pray go on.’

‘I tell you that Banquo’s chair yonder was turned back when I sat down here, and all of a sudden—in broad daylight, and with nobody touching it—it assumed its present position.’

‘You must have been kicking your legs about,’ said Dashwood, unsympathetically.

‘Or, more likely, “lifting your elbow,”’ put in Seymour; ‘you do take too much wine, my dear Rawlings, you know you do.’

‘I had only had one glass of champagne.’

‘That was just it; you felt the want of it, my good fellow. Take a hair of the dog that bit you,’ said Dashwood, with the air of an expert giving professional advice. ‘Toss off a glass of brandy.’

‘He’s had enough of spirits,’ murmured Seymour.

‘Why, you don’t mean to tell me,’ continued Dashwood imperiously, ‘that poor old Browne pulled back his own chair?’

'I don't know, I'm sure, but I can't help thinking that something has happened to Browne.'

'But we all know that something *has* happened to him,' urged Dashwood.

'Which we all knew, moreover, was *very likely* to happen to him,' remarked Seymour. (What *did* he mean?)

'Yes,' said Rawlings solemnly, 'but going off your nut is one thing, and going off the hooks is another.'

'Still, when the mind is gone what matters the body?' sighed Dashwood—'just give me those fried potatoes, waiter, and order me some toast for the caviar—depend upon it, it will be a happy release. His temper was getting unbearable.'

'Don't say that, please don't,' said Rawlings earnestly. 'Or at least not now. For all we know he may be sitting in that chair.'

'Exceedingly improbable,' remarked Seymour. He was a successful barrister, and very sceptical. 'There is no evidence of it to go to a jury.'

'If Seymour had you in the box about it, my dear Rawlings, he would turn you inside out in five minutes,' said Dashwood confidently.

'If it was not so superfluous,' remarked the advocate dryly.

Rawlings, deprived of his liquor, and staring suspiciously at the empty chair, had certainly rather an eviscerated appearance. 'Still, he *may* be here,' he murmured.

'And a very good thing if he was,' said Dashwood, philosophically, 'and could hear the truth about himself. He always shrank from that.'

'Well, I confess I liked him,' said Seymour, with the air of a man who expects to meet with opposition, and without being altogether prepared to resist it.

'Why?' inquired Dashwood.

'Well, perhaps one doesn't know exactly why,' admitted the other. 'One had to dive for it, of course, but I do really think he was a good-natured fellow, under the mud.'

'He was pleasant enough when he was pleased, if you mean *that*,' said Dashwood. 'There was a certain agreeable insolence about him, I don't deny; but a more conceited fellow under the pretence of simplicity, or a more cunning one under the veil of frankness—'

'He was a little mad,' put in Rawlings apologetically; 'every one knows that now.'

'Yes, but there was a deal of method in his madness. He managed somehow, notwithstanding that engaging eccentricity, to get his own way through life, and never lose sight of the main chance.'

'That was a sad trait in him indeed,' said Seymour with a twinkle in his left eye, 'and quite peculiar to himself.'

'Don't say "through life," Dashwood,' cried Rawlings imploringly, 'until we are quite sure; it isn't decent.'

'Very well, if you object to the phrase, let us say "for the last twenty years," or "as long as we've known him."'

If the 'Lancet' supposes that it is impossible for a disembodied spirit to get into a perspiration the 'Lancet' is wrong; I hadn't a dry thread on me. I had read, of course, that listeners never hear any good of themselves, but I had never imagined that a respectable proverb could be pushed to such an extremity as this, and yet there was more and worse—to come.

'How did old Browne, by-the-bye, get his money, to *begin with*?' inquired Dashwood. 'There was something queer about it, was there not?'

'I should think there *was*,' said Seymour, in his soft subacid way. 'It was one of the first cases in which I was ever concerned. He made a capital witness, capital—stuck at nothing, that I will say for him.'

'What do you mean; perjury?' said Dashwood, much excited, and squeezing more lemon over his caviar than he had intended. Seymour nodded with great significance.

'I must say nothing about that,' he said with professional gravity; 'the fact is, I was his counsel, so my mouth is sealed.'

'Oh, *dò* tell us!'

'Not now,' cried Rawlings; 'I insist upon its not being told now; not till we have seen the paper to-morrow morning. I cannot help thinking that something dreadful has happened to the Cork.'

The Cork! Then *I* was the Cork! Those sporting wretches in the next room had been talking of *me* after all, though only to make an inhuman bet about my chances of recovery. I rose from my chair in disgust, and only just in time.

'You have kept my place, I hope,' said a voice I knew, though I didn't know the man it belonged to. He was an old member of the Club, but not of our set, who had been lately made the editor of a great weekly paper.

'We always keep *your* place, Mr. Magnus,' said Dashwood, with courteous deference.

It was for *him*, then, that chair had been turned back, and not for me! I'd a great mind to pull it from under him as he sat down, and break his neck.

'I'm afraid, Mr. Magnus, you will now have that chair in perpetuity,' said Rawlings mournfully.

'Afraid? Well, really that is one of the things one would rather not have said,' said Dashwood, with indignation. 'Old Browne was all very well in his way—but Mr. Magnus!'

'Is your friend worse?' said the great man placidly as he peppered his lobster.

'I fear so.'

'Poor fellow! Well, I'll send round to his house the last thing to-night, and if anything has happened—for your sakes, gentlemen—he shall have a paragraph.'

'An immortality indeed,' observed Dashwood courteously.

'And one for which he has been always yearning,' added Seymour sweetly. 'I wonder whether he will be permitted to hear it. But of course that *depends*.'

I suppose nobody ever left a Club—who had not been expelled from it by a general meeting—in a more depressed condition than I did.

As to walking home, that was not to be thought of; and I had had quite enough of omnibuses. Fortunately at the door stood an open and roomy carriage, which I knew was about to convey a wicked and invalid old financier of my acquaintance to his house in my quarter of the town. I climbed in over the door, and modestly took a back seat. Presently he appeared, a mass of capes and cloaks, and was assisted into the vehicle by his footman (whom he swore at). It had C springs, but that of course did not help him to discern *me*, and was very comfortable. He lay back thinking of many things not to his credit (though it was almost unlimited); Black Care, he knew, was sitting behind him (in the fold of the head), but he little guessed who was sitting in front of him. However, he brought me within a hundred yards of my door, so I will say nothing against him. The service he was rendering me was not a great one, but, even when the beer is small, 'one should not look a gift cask in the bunghole.'

I let myself in with my latchkey and shimmered up to my room, as noiseless on the stairs as when a boy I used to slide

down the banisters after jam at night, and with the same (faint) consciousness of misdoing. I felt that eavesdropping was not quite an honourable practice (nor nearly so amusing as I had expected it to be); but when one has once taken to it—like money that ought to have been left to somebody else—it is somehow very difficult to give it up. There is an attraction about it which it is impossible to explain, but once experienced one is always wanting—like a seat in Parliament, with all its inconveniences and degradations—to try it again.

Though what I had heard about myself from my Club friends could hardly be considered satisfactory—and indeed their observations had been much more familiar than welcome—I yearned to learn what was my Angelina's private opinion of me. My very want of success at the Club even increased this longing. Friendship had failed me, but Love, Love, Love, that makes the world go round (and doubtless on that account makes one so dizzy to think of), would surely make amends for it. My good nurse, all alone with her sherry—for as we know she had no other companion, the servants being all engaged—had waited (with fits and starts) for my bell, and congratulated me on my long and refreshing rest, whereas I had had hardly strength enough to swallow my lump of sugar. As I dropped at once into a wholesome slumber (produced by so much healthy exercise in the open air) she wrote down 'lethargy' on her little slate—the last effort of the faithful creature in the cause of duty—and fell into an alcoholic sleep herself in the armchair.

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#### CHAPTER IV.

##### ANGELINA.

MR. NATHANIEL SPIFFKINS lived in a small and unambitious street in Bloomsbury. And why not? That is the unanswerable question—not unmingled with ferocity—I have always put to meddling friends who have been hostile to my matrimonial projects. If I had said 'And why?' they would have given me fifty reasons, each more unpleasant than the other. At one time he had been prosperous, and lived in the neighbouring square. Angelina had been brought up in marble halls, or halls that had at least been painted in imitation of marble. She had been born in the purple—though, indeed, all babes are much of that colour—and with a silver spoon

in her mouth, which had not, however, in any way interfered with its exquisite shape. Those lovely eyes had in early girlhood blinked beneath five large gas chandeliers (counting the two in the back drawing-room), and had (generally) seen better days. But you would never have guessed it from her behaviour. She was wont to say, in her artless way—and drawing her very metaphors from the simplest and most innocent source—that it was no use crying over spilt milk. Some girls would have abused their father up hill and down dale, for having lost his money in speculation; but her intelligence suggested to her that he did not lose it by design, and no doubt it was a consolation to her to feel that where he had lost thousands, others, who had a high opinion of his sagacity and advice, had lost tens of thousands, and had not saved so much out of the fire even as he had. She had common sense far beyond her years, except on one point. She still stuck to Jack Atkins, the War Office clerk. (I always remembered his name, because it was that of the mutineer in ‘Robinson Crusoe,’ whom he also resembled in character; a very disagreeable, insolent, courageous fellow.) He had loved her when she was rich, and he pretended to do so—or even, perhaps, really did it, for he was anything but sensible—now she was poor. She called it fidelity, and her father (very properly) fiddle-de-dee.

The good old man had done his best for her—not, it was whispered, without very serious risk to himself; (but *that* was all over, thank goodness; there was nothing, as Seymour would have said, to go to a jury, or, at all events, it hadn’t gone there;) and now it was surely her turn to do her best for *him*. It would be egotistic and conceited in me to indicate the man who, in her father’s opinion (and mine) had become her best; moreover, it was not as best man—but I am ‘wandering’—the very thing of which the doctor and the nurse complain of me, though, I protest, without the slightest cause.

In the days of her prosperity Angelina had favoured Jack, notwithstanding the disproportion between their fortunes, and even made it the ground of her favour; how delightful, she averred, it would be to dower him with her wealth, though it would be a poor return, indeed, for his unselfish devotion. ‘How satisfactory it is,’ she would say, ‘to reflect that I have got enough for two, or even more’ (for she was not one to shut her eyes to the future), ‘and that his having nothing but his salary (and his debts) is of no sort of consequence.’ And now she had gone right



round, and contended that, in making her poor, fate had only been fitting them for one another.

‘And how about *me*?’ would here put in Spiffkins, not unnaturally; when she would burst into tears, which he justly thought a good symptom. The kind old fellow was doing what he could for me (and himself) I knew; but I was anxious to know *what* he was doing.

The next afternoon, matters were all arranged at home as before, and I left it, lighter than ever, buoyed up by tender expectation, and on the wings of love. Now, the best way of getting to Midge Street, Bloomsbury (under my rather peculiar circumstances), was by the Metropolitan Railway, and though a man who has been given up by the doctors naturally shrinks from ‘the Underground,’ I took it. In the morning and the evening there are five-and-twenty passengers or so in every carriage of the Metropolitan, but in the afternoon there is plenty of room. In my carriage there was nobody; from the point of view of a traffic manager, not even me. I had given honesty a fair trial, and was not going to try it again. How absurd it sounded to hear the gate collector ask one to show one’s ticket, when I could not even show myself.

It had been said of me, by one who envied me my Angelina, that I went to Midge Street so often that it was a pity there was not a hole cut for me in the door, that I might go in and out like the cat. A brutal jest enough; but, as it happened, I now wished that some such accommodation had been provided for me. As matters stood, there was nothing for it but to ring the bell, and slip in the best way I could. As I had hoped, the slavey came out on the doorstep, looked to left and right, with a ‘Drat them boys!’ (thinking it was a runaway ring), and gave me the desired opportunity.

The drawing-room door was on the jar, and so far typified what was going on within; a domestic fracas was taking place there between old Spiffkins and his daughter, and from the fact of my Angelina being in tears, I guessed at once (and rightly) that I was the subject of their disagreement. The lovely girl was standing in a defiant attitude, with her beautiful arms a-kimbo; a flush on her cheek, and a flash in her eye. The old gentleman was huddled up in his armchair, with his hands before his face, but keeping a sharp look out between his fingers. I am afraid (to use a phrase she would herself have scorned to employ) she had been ‘letting him have it.’

'I don't care whether he is better or worse,' she was saying, with a touch of temper that became her admirably.

'Quite right, dear,' he answered blandly; 'you will have to *take* him for better or worse; what a comfort it is to think that it will not be for richer or poorer. You wouldn't like to see our little establishment, scaly as it is, bust up, I suppose?'

Spiffkins was certainly vulgar in his mode of expressing himself; but, on the other hand, he was not one of those 'sophisticated rhetoricians' who leave you in doubt of their meaning. The cruel shaft went home to that gentle heart; her arms dropped down to her side and she plumped down—and how charmingly plump she was!—upon the sofa.

'Would you have me marry a madman?' she pleaded indignantly.

Spiffkins kept his temper admirably; the infamous libel on his friend (and creditor) did not seem to move him in the least.

'My dear child, I don't want you to marry him *now*; it may be a week or two before he gets all right again——'

'*Again!*' she interrupted scornfully. 'He never was right, and he never will be right.'

'You mean in his mind?' he inquired gently.

'Of course I mean in his mind.'

It was curious to remark the difference of tone and manner in these two persons, otherwise so near akin. The one all peacefulness, wisdom, and common sense; full of 'reverence and the silver hair'—though not so well provided with the latter as he had been; the other hardly knowing what she said, and not much caring; young (who can blame her for that? not *me*), impetuous, and carried away by the merest froth of feeling, and yet looking so exceedingly pretty. (In that, and that only, she had a decided advantage over Spiffkins.)

'The question is, my dear,' he continued calmly, 'what is madness? "Great wits to madness are allied" we read, and certainly Browne is full of fun.'

'I hate his fun,' cried Angelina.

'Quite right. What we want is his earnest' (the way that Spiffkins had of agreeing with her whenever he could, was certainly most sagacious and judicious). 'That he is eccentric, there is no doubt; but nobody can deny his ability to make a settlement.'

'A settlement! What's a settlement?' she answered bitterly.

'Well, that crack in the wall yonder is a settlement, and I am sorry to say there are a good many of them,' he added, with a deep-drawn sigh; 'but the one I refer to is a provision for life.'

'It would be but a short life,' she murmured, despairingly.

'No doubt; that is what the doctors tell me; then when you've got rid of him you could marry Jack.'

This was a most abominable idea, but I forgave it Spiffkins on the spot for the sake of the excellent motive that I knew was actuating him; nor could I withhold my admiration for the sagacity that had so promptly caused him to affect to misunderstand her meaning. It was plain she was to be shaken (to quote from my medicine labels), and might possibly be taken, though she wasn't taken (at least with me) at present.

'After all,' he continued, as if ashamed of his last argument, 'what matters a little queerness in a man's character so long as it isn't his moral character,' put in Spiffkins, in the tone of one who makes an insurmountable proviso. 'Why, I knew a man in the House of Commons, who lived for years in a lunatic asylum, but who was always let out—under the influence of belladonna—to vote on great occasions. That was rather an extreme case, I admit—though he saved his country more than once—but what grounds have you for thinking our good friend Browne anything more than a little queer. He is well informed, fond of literature, and quotes from the poets like—like winking.'

Again I deplored the want of facility of expression in Spiffkins; if he had rounded that last sentence a little better, it would certainly have been more effective.

'Yes, he quotes enough, but it's never right,' urged Angelina. 'To give you an idea of what he is capable of in that way, we were talking together one day of that beautiful poem beginning "The windflower and the violet have perished long ago," by Bryant—is it not Bryant who writes so sweetly on spring time?'

'To be sure,' murmured Spiffkins, 'Bryant and May;' (but fortunately she didn't hear him).

'Well, how do you think he quoted *that*? He said, "The aster and the asterisk have perished long ago." If it had been *all* nonsense, I should have thought he was joking; but the aster *is* a flower, you know.'

'To be sure,' answered Spiffkins; 'the Jacob Aster; it's an American plant.'

'I did not know there was that particular variety of it,' said

Angelina, indifferently; 'but Mr. Browne's referring to it showed a method in his madness which seemed somehow worse than if there had been none.'

'I can't follow you there,' said Mr. Spiffkins. Nor more could I to save my life. Her logic seemed to me like that of the gallery god, who when the actor spoke the line, 'My wound is great, because it is so small,' exclaimed, 'Then 'twould be greater were it none at all.' The whole thing was too subtle for me; I got mixed.

'What I mean,' said Angelina, 'is that Mr. B. seems to have just enough sagacity to keep him out of a lunatic asylum, and that's all.'

All! and enough too, I thought. To call me Mr. B. too! Old Spiffkins was hurt, as well he might be.

'Don't say that,' he said pathetically, 'even to *me*. It has just been decided that what a man tells even his wife is "publication;" it may cause an action for libel. You are not "privileged" to say such things.'

'I am only speaking the truth,' said Angelina, tapping her pretty foot upon the floor. 'You know perfectly well he is as mad as a March hare, papa.'

'If it's only in March,' he began apologetically, but she wouldn't listen to him.

'How can you have the face to deny it? Do you not know for a fact that he knocked at his own door the other day and asked if Mr. Browne was at home?'

I remembered the unfortunate mistake, though I didn't know it had got abroad. The truth is I was a little absent at the time, which naturally caused me to inquire whether I was at home or not.

'My dear child,' said the ready Spiffkins, 'only consider what a common name Browne is. He probably forgot himself for a moment (you do it yourself, I regret to say, occasionally), and was thinking of another Browne.'

She shook her head. The explanation, unanswerable as it was, evidently did not satisfy her; womanlike, she declined to admit defeat, and flew off to another argument.

'Then he is so intensely selfish.'

'That isn't madness, at all events,' answered old Spiffkins cheerfully; 'quite the contrary.'

'Never shall I forget his conduct when we were out yachting

last summer. How, when we were all enjoying ourselves, and the vessel began to "lop" a little, he insisted on being put ashore immediately.'

'Very natural, my dear.'

'Yes, but what I objected to was his insisting on taking me with him! Then when we were crossing the gentleman's garden, and he came out swearing and with a stick, how meanly Mr. B. behaved! He cried "Don't strike her. She was in her father's yacht, and felt sea-sick; I knew it was a trespass, but I felt that in the case of illness and a lady you wouldn't mind." The poor gentleman almost fell on his knees with shame, and offered us sherry and biscuits.'

'But what a ready wit!' exclaimed old Spiffkins, admiringly.

'I hate such wit,' said Angelina.

'Still he *is* witty, you must allow; remember how he answered Professor Slowcoach who wanted to know when a *Te Deum* was first solemnised after a victory. "Probably," said Browne, "after the siege of Tyre."'

'Nobody saw the joke but myself till the next day,' said Angelina, depreciatingly.

'That was their fault, and shows that you and he were made for one another, my dear.'

'Stuff and nonsense. I don't believe that Mr. Browne even knew that he was making a joke.'

'That's genius,' said Spiffkins, confidently. He was certainly a sharp old man, and if he had been a lawyer, would have cut a figure at the Old Bailey (which indeed, even as it was, he very nearly did).

'Then, like that dreadful old Professor in "Middlemarch," Mr. Browne makes such noises over his soup.'

This was downright rude, and of course untrue; but the manner which Angelina had of saying *anything* was attractive. She gave a little imitation of the (supposed) noise, which sounded to *me* like the note of a bird.

'My dear child, if I was as rich as Browne,' said her father, reprovingly, 'I should make noises.'

'Well, then, I'm glad you ain't,' cried Angelina, tartly—or rather jam-tartly, for, bless her, she could not help being sweet. That she should have expressed herself pleased with such a circumstance was a clear proof that the poor dear did not know what she was saying.

‘However, it’s no good talking any more about the matter, papa, for Dr. Jones himself assured me that even if Mr. Browne should get over his present illness, he will never be himself again.’

‘Very good; what *can* be better news, my dear?’ said Spiffkins pleasantly. ‘You say you don’t like him as he is, and if he isn’t going to be himself any more—— By Jingo, there’s that fellow Atkins.’

There was a ring at the front door. There seemed something ominous in Atkins coming with *that*, though he couldn’t have well got in without it. To witness his meeting with my Angelina was not to be endured. There was, however, still a moment or two of happiness for me (such as it was), for the slavey, thinking it might be another ‘runaway,’ was not in a hurry to answer the door. Who can resist an opportunity that may never occur again? With that beautiful and accomplished young creature before my eyes I forgot that I was myself invisible.

Angelina gave a piercing scream. ‘Papa,’ she cried, ‘somebody’s kissed me!’

‘What, already!’ he said contemptuously; and alas, I knew only too well what he meant.

‘I tell you it is so!’ she exclaimed; ‘a horrid *scrubby* kiss.’

The poor dear only spoke the truth; I had not shaved for six weeks. They would not even trust me with a pair of scissors.

‘Scrubby!’ echoed Spiffkins; ‘a girl of your age ought not to know the difference.’

It was very true, but very dreadful. Carried away by my feelings, I fled the room like a feather. I met my hated rival—I need not say he had no moustache—on the stairs; I was obliged to give him the wall, and gladly indeed would I have heaved a brick at him. He looked disgustingly young, and handsome, and happy. Thank heaven he was in debt; that was *something*, but it was all (except old Spiffkins) I had to trust to. However, he would have to wait for the banns to be put up, at all events, for his ready money, I knew, didn’t ‘run to’ a licence.

My blood boiled in my veins, so that people turned round in the street to listen to it, then thought it a singing in their own ears, and made a mem to take a pill. But what did *I* care about their trifling with their constitutions? When I got home and took my sugar, I could have almost wished it was sugar of lead. ‘Henceforth,’ cried I, with a person of greater eminence, but who

could not have felt more wickedly disposed, 'Evil be thou my good.'

I would haunt Angelina at the very altar and beyond it; no considerations of propriety should restrain me. I had had enough of propriety, and of everything else. No, not of everything; there was not enough of that preparation of fernseed left for the revenge of a lifetime. I must make some more. Great heaven, the jar was empty! 'Nurse,' I cried, frantic with this discovery; 'nurse, where is my fernseed?'

She answered from the dressing-room, where she was rinsing out (she called it 'wrenching out') something or other:

'Your what, sir? Do you mean your linseed meal? Why, I've just been washing on it away; it was getting hard and bad.'

It was not so hard and bad as *I* felt. My magic power was gone, and I had no means of recovering it. The jar had held only a specimen; sufficient indeed for my simple needs at present; but how was I to procure the receipt for future use? How little, when one can be invisible at pleasure, do we poor mortals think of the future!

'Nurse,' cried I, 'you're drunk.'

I knew she was not, but it was a relief to my feelings.

Here something seemed to give me a violent box on the ear—most likely a snapping of some rather largish vessel in the brain—and I became insensible. When I came to myself again, it was to-morrow.

Deprived of my magic mixture, of course I could not take it 'as before.' The scheme of life I had mapped out for myself was nipped in the bud, like a flower in spring. The aster had, so to speak, become an asterisk. But the worst was yet to come. Almost every human being in this cold world has some sympathiser with his misfortunes. If one holds four by honours and fails to secure the odd trick, the ready tear starts at least from one's partner's eye; if one loses one's case before the judge, even one's solicitor (especially if one can't pay his costs) is moved, though he doesn't move for a new trial; if one drops a sovereign in the street, the passing stranger is sorry—if he doesn't find it.

But I—I who had been so marvellously endowed, and suddenly found myself deprived of Fortune's rarest gift—was sympathised with by nobody. The incredulous world actually *refuses to believe that I ever had it*. My own positive assertion, a gentleman's word, goes for nothing.



'I have no doubt, my dear sir, you *thought* you had it,' is the very best I can get out of even my own doctor. He admits, indeed, when I tell him of the consultation I overheard between Sir Lucas and Mr. Scratchwig, that no doubt they behaved very much as I described them to have done. *That*, he says, is only human nature.

'It is your extraordinary powers of intuition, my dear sir,' he contends, 'that have caused you to know what these men said, and your no less wonderful gift of imagination that leads you to think you heard it.'

I don't want compliments, however, but corroboration. I am collecting what facts I can to support my experience—for I am getting quite well and strong in the country air, at Hanwell in Middlesex—and no unprejudiced person will deny that they have considerable weight. Angelina is married to Jack, which it cannot be denied I foresaw; Welsford has married Jemima, and taken a public house, just as I heard him say he would do. The policeman, it is true, has not married the cook, but that was not her fault; he was married already. When I asked Dashwood what they had been saying of me at the luncheon table on the day when I paid them that memorable visit, he changed colour, and said it was impossible to recollect. They were always talking of me off and on. I hope I called on the 'off' day. It was quite true that Rawlings had had champagne on the date in question, and thought he saw something which nobody else could see. The editor had also sat in my chair. I think that pretty well, even if, as Seymour says (as usual), it is not enough for a jury. Upon the whole I think, if the case is tried, I should prefer a jury of matrons, for my nurse admits (though more particularly in connection with that absurd notion of hers about my 'cunning') that there were occasions 'when she could see through me.' If she could do that my case is proved.

## OUR DISTRICT SCHOOLS.

DISTRICT Schools, which are of recent growth, are for the maintenance and proper education of our pauper children. By the Poor Law Amendment Act, passed in the year 1834, England was parcelled out into districts, each with its workhouse, its poor-law officers, and other paraphernalia pertaining to the administration of the said Act. Outdoor relief had been lavished on the labouring poor to make up their inadequate wages, and it was now decreed that able-bodied paupers should be relieved only by means of the workhouses, the weekly allowance in money or kind being restricted to the aged or infirm, who might or might not be able to augment it by some light employment. The rapid increase, however, of the population of our large towns made it necessary that something more should be done, if indoor accommodation was to be given to all able-bodied paupers and their families. Schools there were almost from the first, where pauper children were cared for and educated while in the workhouse with their parents; but when these places became flooded with the pauper overflow of large districts, it was found impossible to keep and educate the children there with any degree of satisfaction. The atmosphere, both moral and physical, was by no means conducive to healthy growth; and it was clearly an injury to the country generally that children should be reared either with doubtful principles or feeble constitutions. The State, standing *in loco parentis* to every pauper child, was in a great degree responsible for the manner in which these young lives were being developed. Why could not the children be sent away from the smoke and fog of the big cities and towns into fresh country air? Why could they not be nurtured and carefully educated at some place where the stamp of pauperism might be wiped out, and its evil influences eradicated, and whence they could in due time emerge and take their places as useful members of the community? An answer to these questions was given in the year 1844 by an Act of Parliament authorising the establishment of district schools. Unions, or parishes not in union, were to be combined for this purpose as occasion might require; and at least twelve large district schools, properly so called, have already sprung up, as well as many

otherschools conducted on the same lines belonging to single unions. They are supported by the poor-rates of the districts to which they belong, and are under the management of boards selected from the guardians, these again being controlled by the Local Government Board. Whether this plan of education has been altogether unmingled with disappointment it is not intended to discuss. The boarding-out system, by which the pauper children of large towns are housed by the labouring poor of country villages, finds favour with some. But if the training in district schools is defective, owing to the somewhat mechanical method rendered necessary by their great size, there are evils connected with the other system also; as anyone can testify who has been officially connected with a country parish. At any rate, it would not be fair to give an opinion as to the respective merits of the two systems until the boarding-out system has received more experimental attention than it has hitherto had.

The usual title for admission to a district school is simply pauperism. A family, we will suppose, is reduced by one or other of the untoward circumstances so common amongst the lower ranks of life to seek the shelter of the workhouse. We will suppose this family to consist of father, mother, and several children. After a few days' stay, such of the children as may be over three and under sixteen years of age, having previously passed through the very necessary ordeal of a thorough cleansing, are despatched from the workhouse, in company with perhaps a dozen others in a similar predicament (or who may be foundlings or orphans), in a roomy wagonette or van. Each child wears a label on which its name is legibly written; the names so inscribed tallying with a descriptive list borne by one of the attendants. On arriving at the schools the children are taken at once to the probationary ward, which is usually a structure apart from the main building, and there they are again bathed and clad in the uniform of the school. The same day they are subjected to a medical examination, and if any be found with suspicions of infectious disease they are separated from the others, and the whole number remain in quarantine till all danger is over. This, however, rarely happens, because, having previously passed the medical scrutiny at the workhouse, they always arrive with a clean bill of health; yet occasions do arise when some disease is developed between the two examinations, and then the above-mentioned course has to be resorted to. The usual duration of their stay in the proba-

tionary ward is fourteen days—at some schools it is three weeks—and then they are drafted into the main building, to make room for the next batch. During the time of probation the children are visited daily by the medical officer. The boys and girls are separated, each sex having wards and a playground of its own. The boys are provided with bats and balls and such other luxuries as may help to make the fortnight pass pleasantly away, while the girls have toys and dolls, and both have books.

But before following these children into the schools proper, it may be well to give some description of the building itself, with its various offices, its surroundings, and its staff. The writer will describe the one best known to himself, for though they may vary considerably in size and in many of their details, yet as regards the main features they are all more or less alike. The schools stand on an elevation, in about a hundred and twenty acres of park-like ground. The frontage, which is three-storied and consists of centre and two wings, extends over a space of about six hundred feet and can be seen many miles away. The building has no pretensions to architectural beauty, but its great size and the uniformity of its frontage give it a handsome, and indeed imposing, appearance. In the centre of this first portion of the building are the superintendent's private apartments, the committee-room, clerks' office, board-room, chaplain's room, and others; while in the wings on either side are dormitories for the boys and girls respectively, and on the girls' side several needle-rooms. On the first floor, the chapel occupies the centre, and more dormitories are situated on either side; and on the floor above are dormitories again. On the top of this long building, outside, is a well-railed passage stretching from end to end, with approaches from the various dormitories, to provide an escape for the inmates in case of fire; and from the centre rises a handsome clock-tower, in which are two cisterns, stored with some six thousand gallons of water-apiece. On each floor there is a spacious corridor from end to end, partitioned with gates. Behind this long frontage, in the centre and at each end, are more buildings joining it at right angles, and extending back some four or five hundred feet. On one side are the boys' class-rooms, swimming bath, and fire-engine room; on the other the girls' class-rooms, bath-room, and teachers' cottages; while the central appendage contains the dining-hall and kitchens. Beyond these, and below them also, are the stores, dairy, bakery, washhouses, laundries,

and the steam-engines. These engines are incessantly at work pumping water from a very deep well for the daily supply; but their usefulness is extended to other purposes also, such as wringing the clothes, turning the lathes, and sometimes mincing the meat. The tailors' and shoemakers' quarters are here too, and the blacksmiths'—a busy hive of industry and cheerful toil. At the end of these three rows of buildings are the infirmary in the centre, and the children's playrooms and other offices on either side, extending so as to enclose two large paved quadrangles; and these form the playgrounds for the boys and girls.

Outside this goodly pile are other buildings in the adjacent grounds, which are guarded by large gates and a porter's lodge. The medical officer's residence is here, nearest to the schools; farther on we see the gasworks and the farm; while in another direction are the probationary ward already mentioned, the band-room, the ophthalmia ward, and the fever hospital. The land is chiefly pasture, and on it some thirty cows, who yield a bountiful supply of excellent milk, may generally be seen enjoying the grass, but part of it is fenced off for cricket and other games, which the children are allowed to indulge in during the summer months. The ophthalmia ward, though partly here, runs also into a separated portion of the main building, and is in itself a school of considerable size. The number of its occupants of course varies; but there are generally from seventy to eighty little people there, afflicted with this insidious complaint. Their lessons, however, and other work go on so far as circumstances permit, and they have on Sunday a special service of their own, conducted by the chaplain. The fever hospital, which is well apart from all the other buildings, is for the reception of those who are seized with any infectious disease. It is divided into several wards, studiously disconnected from each other, each ward containing ten beds. It is well provided with all the modern requisites for the comfort of the patients, and of course with appliances for disinfection. The school staff numbers nearly a hundred workers, and consists of superintendent and matron, who are generally husband and wife, medical officer, chaplain, farm-bailiff, male and female teachers, needlewomen, engineer, storekeepers, workmen of nearly every craft, yardsmen, nurses, servants, and labourers. Most of the male teachers and nearly all the craftsmen and labourers are non-resident.

When the period of probation is over, and each child is pro-

nounced free from any infectious disease, they are admitted into the schools proper, and distributed in such quarters as their circumstances require. The stronger boys and girls are handed over to the drill master and drill mistress respectively, and by them to the teachers, who place them in standards according to their qualifications. It frequently happens that younger children find themselves placed higher than some of their older companions, for education in their class of life is often neglected, notwithstanding the vigilance of the School Boards. The sickly children go to the infirmary, and the 'infants'—that is, the children under seven—are placed in charge of nurses in such of the infant wards as may be able to make room for them.

The course of study, as ordered by the Local Government Board, comprises 'reading, writing, and arithmetic, the principles of the Christian religion, and such other instruction as may be calculated to produce in the children habits of industry and virtue, and to promote their future usefulness and welfare.' This minimum course, however, can be supplemented according to circumstances, by direction of the managers. In some cases drawing and class-singing are added to the regular curriculum; while the three 'R's' themselves include spelling and dictation. Incidentally, too, a good deal of geography and other useful information is imparted by the excellent reading-books now so generally used. Religious teaching again can be made to include such elements of physiological knowledge as may be helpful in giving an increased sense of the dignity of human life, and explaining the laws of health and the duty of self-respect. Still it is hoped that the legal standard may soon be raised; for, under the various social influences now at work, the old dull type of intellect is certainly less common than it used to be. Even in district schools many a bright intelligent face may be found, bespeaking a capacity for something higher than mere rudiments; besides, boys become better workmen and girls better servants when their Christian principles are fortified by the further refining influences of more extended knowledge.

In at least one district school there is a 'Kindergarten' for the 'infants,' where their calisthenic exercises are gone through with a nimbleness and spirit which would surprise many scholars of a much higher grade. But pauper children are just like other children after all, for the infant mind knows nothing of pauperism, nor of Bumbledom either, in these days; so on they jaunt and

sing, as pleasantly and as merrily as though each little child had been born to a coronet! And if, indeed, 'kind hearts are more than coronets,' the innocence and trust of these little hearts must be worth something; nor do they fail to evoke an echo of sympathy and compassion from their teachers. For the most part, these 'infants' feel quite at home; they remember no other, and their instinctive love finds its way to their teachers and attendants.

The older boys and girls are, of course, separated, their school-rooms and their dormitories being very far apart, as has been already shown. Those who have passed the fourth standard become 'half-timers'—that is, half their time only is devoted to book-learning, their alternate days being occupied in assisting in the workshops, or in such other industries, a knowledge of which may be useful to them in after life. The boys learn trades, that of a carpenter being the favourite one, though some learn shoemending, tailoring, and other trades, while some are employed on the farm or at the gasworks, others in the band, and others for errands and letter-carrying. The half-time girls are occupied with more domestic work—washing, ironing, cooking, house-cleaning, helping with the 'infants'; these and such as these are the industries which fall to the lot of the girls.

The punishments for misbehaviour, which are prescribed by the Local Government Board, are not by any means severe. For minor offences, change of diet is considered penalty enough. More serious misconduct is met by detention, and amongst the boys the cane is sometimes used. Corporal punishment, however, can only be inflicted by the superintendent or the head schoolmaster, and all punishments have to be reported in a book and laid before the managers every week. In extreme cases, where contamination of the other children is thought probable, expulsion is resorted to.

On Sundays the children attend the chapel both morning and afternoon, where the services are bright and cheerful, and the teaching is adapted to their own peculiar needs. The music is always previously rehearsed; and, if the singing lacks refinement, it is at any rate vigorous and hearty. The children assemble twice also in the various class-rooms for short religious instruction, and spend the rest of the day in reading or other suitable pursuits, and, when weather permits, enjoy a walk in the surrounding fields. Baptism is administered where it is found to have been neglected, and in doubtful cases also; and confirmation is conferred upon those whose age and qualifications admit of it.



Although sewing is taught in the girls' school as part of the regular course, there are needle-rooms which the 'half-timers' pass through also, where not only mending is done, but outfits are made for the girls who are going to service. Boys and girls who have reached the age of fourteen, if they are fairly forward in their lessons, are exempt from further study of the three 'R's,' and are daily employed with industrial work, like the working division of the 'half-timers.'

The band is a great feature at most of the district schools, and often attains a degree of efficiency really surprising when the ages and origin of the boys are considered. With the exception of drums and triangles, wind instruments are exclusively used—clarionets, cornets, trombones, euphoniums, &c., and the selections played are always pleasing, and sometimes really difficult. About forty boys are always in the band proper, and a similar number in training to fill the places of those who leave. These boys are eagerly sought after by the masters of military bands, into which most of them eventually go, if they are free from physical defect. The band is in great demand during the summer months for garden parties, flower shows, and other fêtes in the neighbourhood, and the money so earned goes to provide the boys themselves with a summer outing. They have a capital uniform for special occasions, of which the little fellows are naturally very proud.

The school infirmary has ten wards, each capable of receiving from fifteen to twenty patients. It is provided with all the necessary sick-room appliances, and it is served by competent nurses, assisted by the half-time girls. Illustrated books, both sacred and secular, draughts and chess, toys and dolls and fragrant flowers, all find a welcome here. The walls too are decorated with bright-looking pictures and texts, and everything else that can be thought of is done to cheer the invalids and make life happy in spite of aches and pains.

The school diet, in accordance with the regulations of the Local Government Board, is liberal and varied. For breakfast and supper each child is supplied with a basin of cocoa containing a large proportion of milk, and an ample allowance of bread and butter. The dinners vary from day to day. Roast and boiled meats, with the usual 'trimmings,' meat puddings and pies, 'toad in the hole,' substantial treacle and plum puddings, and fruit puddings when in season, all take their turns. The food is wheeled up the dining-hall in portable ovens and served by the

attendants, each portion being weighed more quickly than it takes to tell, and passed along by a detachment of boys told off for that purpose. The long and spacious dining-hall is lighted by a glass roof, and its walls are decorated with frescoes and appropriate mottoes. A wide passage runs down the middle, and tiers of narrow tables with a form attached to each are fixed on either side for the boys and girls respectively. About eight hundred children are served here, but the younger 'infants' and the infirm children have meals in their wards, and the ophthalmia children have a dining-room of their own. The diet, however, is the same throughout, except of course for those on invalid fare. Before meals the children assemble in the playground, or in the corridors if wet, whence they march into the hall in orderly troops. The marching to the mid-day meal is assisted by the band, the strains of which not only give precision to the steps but also drown the clatter of the sixteen hundred feet. Grace is sung, and when the children are seated quiet talking to a moderate extent is not forbidden. During dinner letters are given out, and others collected which the children wish to send away.

District school children are not without their high days and holidays. One day in each week is called 'visiting day,' when their parents and friends (if they have any) can come and see them for two hours. The same people cannot come oftener than once in three months; still the visiting room is generally well filled, and the meetings of mother and child are often very touching. The growth and healthy appearance of the little ones form the usual topic of conversation, and grateful indeed do the parents always seem to find their children so happy and well cared for. Then, twice a year the schools are *en fête* for the managers and their friends, who enter into the games and amusements of the children, distribute prizes, and regale them with daintier fare. In the height of summer, again, school work is suspended for three weeks, and the children ramble through the meadows culling buttercups and daisies or romping in the hay. Christmas, Easter, and Whitsuntide also bring their share of recreation.

District schools, as may be expected, are under a rigid system of inspection. The managers are divided into five committees, and one or more of these pay weekly an official visit, and go the round of the establishment. Workshops, stores, class-rooms, dormitories, farm-buildings, gasworks, and every other part, come under their official notice and survey, and their visits give encouragement to

officers and children alike. The latter are always the recipients of kind words, and not infrequently of something more substantial when any peculiar circumstances render special favours possible. The Poor Law Board inspectors come without notice several times in the year to see that all the arrangements are being duly and properly performed according to the orders of that Board, and the educational inspector comes annually to take stock of the advancement of the children in their school work. As there are five or six standards of each sex to be examined, as well as the ophthalmia ward and the 'infants,' several days are occupied by this inspection, and a report is subsequently published recording the result.

Unless the parents remove them previously, the children generally leave the school soon after the age of fourteen, and in no case are they kept beyond sixteen. The boys go to various situations and trades, and the girls to domestic service, all being provided with liberal outfits. Many of the boys join a training-ship, and become sailors, while others get into regimental bands. Most of the girls when in service are under the kindly care of the 'Metropolitan Association for Befriending Young Girls' until they are twenty years of age. This excellent society provides, in the person of a lady visitor, a guardian angel for each girl, finds a fresh place when necessary, and a home during any time that may intervene between two situations.

Such is an outline of the plan and working of 'Our District Schools.' They may have their blemishes or defects, like every other institution. To say that they are perfect would be to call them more than human, but of their excellence no one who knows them well can entertain a doubt. The overgrowth of some may be a disadvantage, so may the want of home life, especially for girls; but their magnitude is not without its compensations, and home life is not always what it ought to be. At any rate, the children mostly turn out well; many are now in good situations, and some are occupying important positions of trust. Black sheep there may be amongst them, as there are in every large community, but these are the exception, and are not more numerous there than at any other schools. So long as good food, pure air, cleanly habits, and careful training—physical, intellectual, and moral—together with a good start in life, are acknowledged to be the best foundation for a healthy, useful, happy future, schools like these for our pauper children will not be easily superseded.

## TURNED OFF!

THERE, 'ang up the bill-'ook, missus, and give us my pipe and a light;

'Aint I ready for supper?' No, thank'e, I wants no supper to-night;

'Twill be time enough when I'm 'ungry to turn to the victuals and drink,

To-night all I wants is the baccy, and to sit by the fire and think.

What about? Wor it that ye wor axin? Lor bless 'er, poor soul, I forgot,

I 'asnt as yet bin and told 'er—and yet I'd as lief be shot,

Like our lad as went out for a soger last year in the Injin fight,

As tell 'er, the poor old missus, why I can't eat no supper to-night!

Yet, tell 'er I maun, same as Joey was forced to stand there stock still,

And face them davils of Injins as they swarm'd on 'im down the 'ill,

And the longer yer waits for to do it, why the wusser it be, I 'spose,

So, I'll just get my pipe well started—that's it—and then orf I goes!

Well, missus, I'se got news for yer, but yer maun't, now, take it amiss,

When we lost our Joey yer bore up, and so yer maun do ower this,

Not as this 'ere time, lor bless yer, it's onything like as black—

It's only my Lord's goin' a tourin', and I—well I'se got the sack!

There, don't say no 'ard things, missus, it ain't my Lord's fault, mebbe;

'E's allers bin fair enough spoken, and her Liddyship, so 'as she;

But as the folks says at the orifice ('tis them in course 'as to speak),

They must begin savin' somewhere, and I corsts 'em twelve shillin' a week.

There's them fellers, yer says, in powder, and her Liddyship's pair o' cobs,

As she spansks with to church in the summer, or a goin' to 'ave tea with the nobs,

And the chap as they calls 'er 'tiger' (tho' why puzzles my old crown !)

And them deer we gets never a taste on—why, yer says, don't they put *them* down ?

Or them horchids my Lord's so crazed with, each blossom, as I'se 'eard said,

If yer reckons one year wi' another, corsting ower a guinea a 'ead !  
And the pheyzants as stands in a pot, too, by the time they'se ready for killin'—

Why doan't they, yer says, put *them* down, afore they docks my twelve shillin' ?

There, I can't tell yer, missus ; says passon, some things 'ere on earth below,

It's no sort o' use to inquire on ; yer isn't supposed to know ;  
And this 'ere be one on 'em, mebbe ; and passon, 'e's no bad chap,  
And things ain't a goin' so easy as they used to wi' 'im, mayhap !  
Still, my feyther, 'e served my Lord's feyther, as afore him 'is feyther, 'e

Werked, too, for my Lord's grandfeyther, as I 'ave for this 'un, yer see,

Ever since just a lad from Collidge 'e took to the title and 'states,  
And it's 'ard when ye're nigh agen sixty, to be turned like a tramp from the gates !

But there, I'se too old for them meetins they talks on, the younger chaps,

And flags, and brass bands, and what not, and spoutin' from four-'orse traps ;

Says passon, the Lord 'as willed it, so I 'ad best, too, be willin' ;  
And the werk'us, mebbe, at sixty, is as good, arter all, as twelve shillin' !

*JOHN HUXFORD'S HIATUS.*

STRANGE it is and wonderful to mark how upon this planet of ours the smallest and most insignificant of events set a train of consequences in motion which act and react until their final results are portentous and incalculable. Set a force rolling, however small, and who can say where it shall end, or what it may lead to! Trifles develop into tragedies, and the bagatelle of one day ripens into the catastrophe of the next. An oyster throws out a secretion to surround a grain of sand, and so a pearl comes into being; a pearl diver fishes it up, a merchant buys it and sells it to a jeweller who disposes of it to a customer. The customer is robbed of it by two scoundrels who quarrel over the booty. One slays the other and perishes himself upon the scaffold. Here is a direct chain of events with a sick mollusc for its first link, and a gallows for its last one. Had that grain of sand not chanced to wash in between the shells of the bivalve, two living breathing beings with all their potentialities for good and for evil would not have been blotted out from among their fellows. Who shall undertake to judge what is really small and what is great?

Thus when in the year 1821 Don Diego Salvador bethought him that if it paid the heretics in England to import the bark of his cork oaks, it would pay him also to found a factory by which the corks might be cut and sent out ready made, surely at first sight no very vital human interests would appear to be affected. Yet there were poor folk who would suffer, and suffer acutely—women who would weep and men who would become sallow and hungry-looking and dangerous in places of which the Don had never heard, and all on account of that one idea which had flashed across him as he strutted, cigarettiferous, beneath the grateful shadow of his limes. So crowded is this old globe of ours, and so interlaced our interests, that one cannot think a new thought without some poor devil being the better or the worse for it.

Don Diego Salvador was a capitalist, and the abstract thought soon took the concrete form of a great square plastered building wherein a couple of hundred of his swarthy countrymen worked with deft nimble fingers at a rate of pay which no English artisan could have accepted. Within a few months the result of this new

competition was an abrupt fall of prices in the trade, which was serious for the largest firms and disastrous for the smaller ones. A few old-established houses held on as they were, others reduced their establishments and cut down their expenses, while one or two put up their shutters and confessed themselves beaten. In this last unfortunate category was the ancient and respected firm of Fairbairn Brothers of Brisport.

Several causes had led up to this disaster, though Don Diego's début as a cork-cutter had brought matters to a head. When a couple of generations back the original Fairbairn had founded the business, Brisport was a little fishing town with no outlet or occupation for her superfluous population. Men were glad to have safe and continuous work upon any terms. All this was altered now, for the town was expanding into the centre of a large district in the west, and the demand for labour and its remuneration had proportionately increased. Again, in the old days when carriage was ruinous and communication slow, the vintners of Exeter and of Barnstaple were glad to buy their corks from their neighbour of Brisport, but now the large London houses sent down their travellers who competed with each other to gain the local custom, until profits were cut down to the vanishing point. For a long time the firm had been in a precarious position, but this further drop in prices settled the matter and compelled Mr. Charles Fairbairn, the acting manager, to close his establishment.

It was a murky, foggy Saturday afternoon in November when the hands were paid for the last time, and the old building was to be finally abandoned. Mr. Fairbairn, an anxious-faced, sorrow-worn man, stood on a raised dais by the cashier while he handed the little pile of hardly-earned shillings and coppers to each successive workman as the long procession filed past his table. It was usual with the employés to clatter away the instant that they had been paid, like so many children let out of school; but to-day they waited, forming little groups over the great dreary room, and discussing in subdued voices the misfortune which had come upon their employers and the future which awaited themselves. When the last pile of coins had been handed across the table and the last name checked by the cashier, the whole throng faced silently round to the man who had been their master, and waited expectantly for any words which he might have to say to them.

Mr. Charles Fairbairn had not expected this, and it embarrassed him. He had waited as a matter of routine duty until the wages



were paid, but he was a taciturn, slow-witted man, and he had not foreseen this sudden call upon his oratorical powers. He stroked his thin cheek nervously with his long white fingers, and looked down with weak watery eyes at the mosaic of upturned serious faces.

'I am sorry that we have to part, my men,' he said at last in a crackling voice. 'It's a bad day for all of us, and for Brisport too. For three years we have been losing money over the works. We held on in the hope of a change coming, but matters are going from bad to worse. There's nothing for it but to give it up before the balance of our fortune is swallowed up. I hope you may all be able to get work of some sort before very long. Good-bye, and God bless you!'

'God bless you, sir! God bless you!' cried a chorus of rough voices. 'Three cheers for Mr. Charles Fairbairn!' shouted a bright-eyed, smart young fellow, springing up upon a bench and waving his peaked cap in the air. The crowd responded to the call, but their huzzas wanted the true ring which only a joyous heart can give. Then they began to flock out into the sunlight, looking back as they went at the long deal tables and the cork-strewn floor—above all at the sad-faced, solitary man whose cheeks were flecked with colour at the rough cordiality of their farewell.

'Huxford,' said the cashier, touching on the shoulder the young fellow who had led the cheering; 'the governor wants to speak to you.'

The workman turned back and stood swinging his cap awkwardly in front of his ex-employer, while the crowd pushed on until the doorway was clear, and the heavy fog-wreaths rolled unchecked into the deserted factory.

'Ah, John!' said Mr. Fairbairn, coming suddenly out of his reverie and taking up a letter from the table. 'You have been in my service since you were a boy, and you have shown that you merited the trust which I have placed in you. From what I have heard I think I am right in saying that this sudden want of work will affect your plans more than it will many of my other hands.'

'I was to be married at Shrovetide,' the man answered, tracing a pattern upon the table with his horny forefinger. 'I'll have to find work first.'

'And work, my poor fellow, is by no means easy to find. You see you have been in this groove all your life, and are unfit for anything else. It's true you've been my foreman, but even that won't help you, for the factories all over England are discharging

hands, and there's not a vacancy to be had. It's a bad outlook for you and such as you.'

'What would you advise, then, sir?' asked John Huxford.

'That's what I was coming to. I have a letter here from Sheridan and Moore, of Montreal, asking for a good hand to take charge of a workroom. If you think it will suit you, you can go out by the next boat. The wages are far in excess of anything which I have been able to give you.'

'Why, sir, this is real kind of you,' the young workman said earnestly. 'She—my girl—Mary, will be as grateful to you as I am. I know what you say is right, and that if I had to look for work I should be likely to spend the little that I have laid by towards housekeeping before I found it. But, sir, with your leave I'd like to speak to her about it before I made up my mind. Could you leave it open for a few hours?'

'The mail goes out to-morrow,' Mr. Fairbairn answered. 'If you decide to accept you can write to-night. Here is their letter, which will give you their address.'

John Huxford took the precious paper with a grateful heart. An hour ago his future had been all black, but now this rift of light had broken in the west, giving promise of better things. He would have liked to have said something expressive of his feelings to his employer, but the English nature is not effusive, and he could not get beyond a few choking awkward words which were as awkwardly received by his benefactor. With a scrape and a bow, he turned on his heel, and plunged out into the foggy street.

So thick was the vapour that the houses over the way were only a vague loom, but the foreman hurried on with springy steps through side streets and winding lanes, past walls where the fishermen's nets were drying, and over cobble-stoned alleys redolent of herring, until he reached a modest line of whitewashed cottages fronting the sea. At the door of one of these the young man tapped, and then without waiting for a response, pressed down the latch and walked in.

An old silvery-haired woman and a young girl hardly out of her teens were sitting on either side of the fire, and the latter sprang to her feet as he entered.

'You've got some good news, John,' she cried, putting her hands upon his shoulders, and looking into his eyes. 'I can tell it from your step. Mr. Fairbairn is going to carry on after all.'

'No, dear, not so good as that,' John Huxford answered,

smoothing back her rich brown hair; 'but I have an offer of a place in Canada, with good money, and if you think as I do, I shall go out to it, and you can follow with the granny whenever I have made all straight for you at the other side. What say you to that, my lass?'

'Why, surely, John, what you think is right must be for the best,' said the girl quietly, with trust and confidence in her pale plain face and loving hazel eyes. 'But poor granny, how is she to cross the seas?'

'Oh, never mind about me,' the old woman broke in cheerfully. 'I'll be no drag on you. If you want granny, granny's not too old to travel; and if you don't want her, why she can look after the cottage, and have an English home ready for you whenever you turn back to the old country.'

'Of course we shall need you, granny,' John Huxford said with a cheery laugh. 'Fancy leaving granny behind! That would never do, Mary! But if you both come out, and if we are married all snug and proper at Montreal, we'll look through the whole city until we find a house something like this one, and we'll have creepers on the outside just the same, and when the doors are shut and we sit round the fire on the winter's nights, I'm hanged if we'll be able to tell that we're not at home. Besides, Mary, it's the same speech out there, and the same king and the same flag; it's not like a foreign country.'

'No, of course not,' Mary answered with conviction. She was an orphan with no living relation save her old grandmother, and no thought in life but to make a helpful and worthy wife to the man she loved. Where those two were she could not fail to find happiness. If John went to Canada, then Canada became home to her, for what had Brisport to offer when he was gone?

'I'm to write to-night then and accept?' the young man asked. 'I knew you would both be of the same mind as myself, but of course I couldn't close with the offer until we had talked it over. I can get started in a week or two, and then in a couple of months I'll have all ready for you on the other side.'

'It will be a weary, weary time until we hear from you, dear John,' said Mary, clasping his hand, 'but it's God's will and we must be patient. Here's pen and ink. You can sit at the table and write the letter which is to take the three of us across the Atlantic.' Strange how Don Diego's thoughts were moulding human lives in the little Devon village.

The acceptance was duly despatched, and John Huxford began immediately to prepare for his departure, for the Montreal firm had intimated that the vacancy was a certainty, and that the chosen man might come out without delay to take over his duties. In a very few days his scanty outfit was completed, and he started off in a coasting-vessel for Liverpool where he was to catch the passenger ship for Quebec.

'Remember, John,' Mary whispered, as he pressed her to his heart upon the Brisport quay; 'the cottage is our own, and come what may we have always that to fall back upon. If things should chance to turn out badly over there, we have always a roof to cover us. There you will find me until you send word to us to come.'

'And that will be very soon, my lass,' he answered cheerfully with a last embrace. 'Good-bye, granny, good-bye.' The ship was a mile and more from the land before he lost sight of the figures of the straight slim girl and her old companion, who stood watching and waving to him from the end of the grey stone quay. It was with a sinking heart and a vague feeling of impending disaster that he saw them at last as minute specks in the distance, walking toward and disappearing amid the crowd who lined the beach.

From Liverpool the old woman and her granddaughter received a letter from John announcing that he was just starting in the barque 'St. Lawrence,' and six weeks afterwards a second longer epistle informed them of his safe arrival at Quebec and gave them his first impressions of the country. After that a long unbroken silence set in. Week after week and month after month passed by, and never a word came from across the seas. A year went over their heads, and yet another, but no news of the absentee. Sheridan and Moore were written to, and replied that though John Huxford's letter had reached them, he had never presented himself, and they had been forced to fill up the vacancy as best they could. Still Mary and her grandmother hoped against hope, and looked out for the letter-carrier every morning with such eagerness, that the kind-hearted man would often make a *détour* rather than pass the two pale anxious faces which peered at him from the cottage window. At last, three years after the young foreman's disappearance, old granny died and Mary was left alone, a broken sorrowful woman, living as best she might on a small annuity which had descended to her, and eating her heart out as she

brooded over the mystery which hung over the fate of her lover.

Among the shrewd west-country neighbours there had long, however, ceased to be any mystery in the matter. Huxford arrived safely in Canada—so much was proved by his letter. Had he met with his end in any sudden way during the journey between Quebec and Montreal, there must have been some official inquiry, and his luggage would have sufficed to have established his identity. Yet the Canadian police had been communicated with and had returned a positive answer that no inquest had been held, or any body found, which could by any possibility be that of the young Englishman. The only alternative appeared to be that he had taken the first opportunity to break all the old ties, and had slipped away to the backwoods or to the States to commence life anew under an altered name. Why he should do this no one professed to know, but that he had done it appeared only too probable from the facts. Hence many a deep growl of righteous anger rose from the brawny smacksmen when Mary with her pale face and sorrow-sunken head passed along the quays on her way to her daily marketing; and it is more than likely that if the missing man had turned up in Brisport he might have met with some rough words or rougher usage unless he could give some very good reason for his strange conduct. This popular view of the case never, however, occurred to the simple trusting heart of the lonely girl, and as the years rolled by her grief and her suspense were never for an instant tinged with a doubt as to the good faith of the missing man. From youth she grew into middle age, and from that into the autumn of her life, patient, long-suffering, and faithful, doing good as far as lay in her power, and waiting humbly until fate should restore either in this world or the next that which it had so mysteriously deprived her of.

In the meantime neither the opinion held by the minority that John Huxford was dead, nor that of the majority, which pronounced him to be faithless, represented the true state of the case. Still alive, and of stainless honour, he had yet been singled out by fortune as her victim in one of those strange freaks which are of such rare occurrence and so beyond the general experience that they might be put by as incredible had we not the most trustworthy evidence of their occasional possibility.

Landing at Quebec, with his heart full of hope and courage, John selected a dingy room in a back street, where the terms were

less exorbitant than elsewhere, and conveyed thither the two boxes which contained his worldly goods. After taking up his quarters there he had half a mind to change again, for the landlady and the fellow-lodgers were by no means to his taste, but the Montreal coach started within a day or two, and he consoled himself by the thought that the discomfort would only last for that short time. Having written home to Mary to announce his safe arrival, he employed himself in seeing as much of the town as was possible, walking about all day, and only returning to his room at night.

It happened, however, that the house on which the unfortunate youth had pitched was one which was notorious for the character of its inmates. He had been directed to it by a pimp, who found regular employment in hanging about the docks and decoying new-comers to this den. The fellow's specious manner and proffered civility had led the simple-hearted west-countryman into the toils, and, though his instinct told him that he was in unsafe company, he refrained, unfortunately, from at once making his escape. He contented himself with staying out all day, and associating as little as possible with the other inmates. From the few words which he did let drop, however, the landlady gathered that he was a stranger without a single friend in the country to inquire after him should misfortune overtake him.

The house had an evil reputation for the hocussing of sailors, which was done not only for the purpose of plundering them, but also to supply outgoing ships with crews, the men being carried on board insensible, and not coming to until the ship was well down the St. Lawrence. This trade caused the wretches who followed it to be experts in the use of stupefying drugs, and they determined to practise their arts upon their friendless lodger, so as to have an opportunity of ransacking his effects, and of seeing what it might be worth their while to purloin. During the day he invariably locked his door and carried off the key in his pocket, but if they could render him insensible for the night they could examine his boxes at their leisure, and deny afterwards that he had ever brought with him the articles which he missed. It happened, therefore, upon the eve of Huxford's departure from Quebec, that he found, upon returning to his lodgings, that his landlady and her two ill-favoured sons, who assisted her in her trade, were waiting up for him over a bowl of punch, which they cordially invited him to share. It was a bitterly cold night, and the fra-



grant steam overpowered any suspicions which the young Englishman may have entertained, so he drained off a bumper, and then, retiring to his bedroom, threw himself upon his bed without undressing, and fell straight into a dreamless slumber, in which he still lay when the three conspirators crept into his chamber, and, having opened his boxes, began to investigate his effects.

It may have been that the speedy action of the drug caused its effect to be evanescent, or, perhaps, that the strong constitution of the victim threw it off with unusual rapidity. Whatever the cause, it is certain that John Huxford suddenly came to himself, and found the foul trio squatted round their booty, which they were dividing into the two categories of what was of value and should be taken, and what was valueless and might therefore be left. With a bound he sprang out of bed, and, seizing the fellow nearest him by the collar, he slung him through the open doorway. His brother rushed at him, but the young Devonshireman met him with such a facer that he dropped in a heap upon the ground. Unfortunately, the violence of the blow caused him to overbalance himself, and, tripping over his prostrate antagonist, he came down heavily upon his face. Before he could rise, the old hag sprang upon his back and clung to him, shrieking to her son to bring the poker. John managed to shake himself clear of them both, but before he could stand on his guard he was felled from behind by a crashing blow from an iron bar, which stretched him senseless upon the floor.

'You've hit too hard, Joe,' said the old woman, looking down at the prostrate figure. 'I heard the bone go.'

'If I hadn't fetched him down he'd ha' been too many for us,' said the young villain sulkily.

'Still you might ha' done it without killing him, clumsy,' said his mother. She had had a large experience of such scenes, and knew the difference between a stunning blow and a fatal one.

'He's still breathing,' the other said, examining him; 'the back o' his head's like a bag o' dice though. The skull's all splintered. He can't last. What are we to do?'

'He'll never come to himself again,' the other brother remarked. 'Sarve him right. Look at my face! Let's see, mother; who's in the house?'

'Only four drunk sailors.'

'They wouldn't turn out for any noise. It's all quiet in the



street. Let's carry him down a bit, Joe, and leave him there. He can die there, and no one think the worse of us.'

'Take all the papers out of his pocket, then,' the mother suggested; 'they might help the police to trace him. His watch, too, and his money—three pound odd; better than nothing. Now carry him softly and don't slip.'

Kicking off their shoes, the two brothers carried the dying man down stairs and along the deserted street for a couple of hundred yards. There they laid him among the snow, where he was found by the night patrol, who carried him on a shutter to the hospital. He was duly examined by the resident surgeon, who bound up the wounded head, but gave it as his opinion that the man could not possibly live for more than twelve hours.

Twelve hours passed, however, and yet another twelve, but John Huxford still struggled hard for his life. When at the end of three days he was found to be still breathing, the interest of the doctors became aroused at his extraordinary vitality, and they bled him, as the fashion was in those days, and surrounded his shattered head with icebags. It may have been on account of these measures, or it may have been in spite of them, but at the end of a week's deep trance the nurse in charge was astonished to hear a gabbling noise, and to find the stranger sitting up upon the couch and staring about him with wistful, wondering eyes. The surgeons were summoned to behold the phenomenon, and warmly congratulated each other upon the success of their treatment.

'You have been on the brink of the grave, my man,' said one of them, pressing the bandaged head back on to the pillow; 'you must not excite yourself. What is your name?'

No answer, save a wild stare.

'Where do you come from?'

Again no answer.

'He is mad,' one suggested. 'Or a foreigner,' said another. 'There were no papers on him when he came in. His linen is marked J. H. Let us try him in French and German.'

They tested him with as many tongues as they could muster among them, but were compelled at last to give the matter over and to leave their silent patient, still staring up wild-eyed at the whitewashed hospital ceiling.

For many weeks John lay in the hospital, and for many weeks efforts were made to gain some clue as to his antecedents, but in

vain. He showed as the time rolled by, not only by his demeanour but also by the intelligence with which he began to pick up fragments of sentences, like a clever child learning to talk, that his mind was strong enough in the present, though it was a complete blank as to the past. The man's memory of his whole life before the fatal blow was entirely and absolutely erased. He neither knew his name, his language, his home, his business, nor anything else. The doctors held learned consultations upon him, and discoursed upon the centre of memory and depressed tables, deranged nerve-cells and cerebral congestions, but all their polysyllables began and ended at the fact that the man's memory was gone, and that it was beyond the power of science to restore it. During the weary months of his convalescence he picked up reading and writing, but with the return of his strength came no return of his former life. England, Devonshire, Brisport, Mary, Granny—the words brought no recollection to his mind. All was absolute darkness. At last he was discharged, a friendless, tradeless, penniless man, without a past and with very little to look to in the future. His very name was altered, for it had been necessary to invent one. John Huxford had passed away, and John Hardy took his place among mankind. Here was a strange outcome of a Spanish gentleman's tobacco-inspired meditations.

John's case had aroused some discussion and curiosity in Quebec, so that he was not suffered to drift into utter helplessness upon emerging from the hospital. A Scotch manufacturer named McKinlay found him a post as porter in his establishment, and for a long time he worked at seven dollars a week at the loading and unloading of vans. In the course of years it was noticed, however, that his memory, however defective as to the past, was extremely reliable and accurate when concerned with anything which had occurred since his accident. From the factory he was promoted into the counting-house, and the year 1835 found him a junior clerk at a salary of 120*l.* a year. Steadily and surely John Hardy fought his way upward from post to post, with his whole heart and mind devoted to the business. In 1840 he was third clerk, in 1845 he was second, and in 1852 he became manager of the whole vast establishment, and second only to Mr. McKinlay himself.

There were few who grudged John this rapid advancement, for it was obviously due to neither chance nor favouritism, but entirely to his marvellous powers of application and industry.

From early morning until late in the night he laboured hard in the service of his employer, checking, overlooking, superintending, setting an example to all of cheerful devotion to duty. As he rose from one post to another his salary increased, but it caused no alteration in his mode of living, save that it enabled him to be more open-handed to the poor. He signalised his promotion to the managership by a donation of 1,000*l.* to the hospital in which he had been treated a quarter of a century before. The remainder of his earnings he allowed to accumulate in the business, drawing a small sum quarterly for his sustenance, and still residing in the humble dwelling which he had occupied when he was a warehouse porter. In spite of his success he was a sad, silent, morose man, solitary in his habits, and possessed always of a vague undefined yearning, a dull feeling of dissatisfaction and of craving which never abandoned him. Often he would strive with his poor crippled brain to pierce the curtain which divided him from the past, and to solve the enigma of his youthful existence, but though he sat many a time by the fire until his head throbbed with his efforts, John Hardy could never recall the least glimpse of John Huxford's history.

On one occasion he had, in the interests of the firm, to journey to Quebec, and to visit the very cork factory which had tempted him to leave England. Strolling through the work-room with the foreman, John automatically, and without knowing what he was doing, picked up a square piece of the bark, and fashioned it with two or three deft cuts of his penknife into a smooth tapering cork. His companion picked it out of his hand and examined it with the eye of an expert. 'This is not the first cork which you have cut by many a hundred, Mr. Hardy,' he remarked. 'Indeed you are wrong,' John answered, smiling: 'I never cut one before in my life.' 'Impossible!' cried the foreman. 'Here's another bit of cork. Try again.' John did his best to repeat the performance, but the brains of the manager interfered with the trained muscles of the cork-cutter. The latter had not forgotten their cunning, but they needed to be left to themselves, and not directed by a mind which knew nothing of the matter. Instead of the smooth graceful shape, he could produce nothing but rough-hewn clumsy cylinders. 'It must have been chance,' said the foreman, 'but I could have sworn that it was the work of an old hand!'

As the years passed John's smooth English skin had warped

and crinkled until he was as brown and as seamed as a walnut. His hair, too, after many years of iron-grey, had finally become as white as the winters of his adopted country. Yet he was a hale and upright old man, and when he at last retired from the managership of the firm with which he had been so long connected, he bore the weight of his seventy years lightly and bravely. He was in the peculiar position himself of not knowing his own age, as it was impossible for him to do more than guess at how old he was at the time of his accident.

The Franco-German war came round, and while the two great rivals were destroying each other, their more peaceful neighbours were quietly ousting them out of their markets and their commerce. Many English ports benefited by this condition of things, but none more than Brisport. It had long ceased to be a fishing village, but was now a large and prosperous town, with a great breakwater in place of the quay on which Mary had stood, and a frontage of terraces and grand hotels where all the grandees of the west country came when they were in need of a change. All these extensions had made Brisport the centre of a busy trade, and her ships found their way into every harbour in the world. Hence it was no wonder, especially in that very busy year of 1870, that several Brisport vessels were lying in the river and alongside the wharves of Quebec.

One day John Hardy, who found time hang a little on his hands since his retirement from business, strolled along by the water's edge listening to the clanking of the steam winches, and watching the great barrels and cases as they were swung ashore and piled upon the wharf. He had observed the coming in of a great ocean steamer, and having waited until she was safely moored, he was turning away, when a few words fell upon his ear uttered by some one on board a little weather-beaten barque close by him. It was only some commonplace order that was bawled out, but the sound fell upon the old man's ears with a strange mixture of disuse and familiarity. He stood by the vessel and heard the seamen at their work, all speaking with the same broad, pleasant jingling accent. Why did it send such a thrill through his nerves to listen to it? He sat down upon a coil of rope and pressed his hands to his temples, drinking in the long-forgotten dialect and trying to piece together in his mind the thousand half-formed nebulous recollections which were surging up in it. Then he rose, and walking along to the stern he read the name of the ship,

'The Sunlight, Brisport.' Brisport! Again that flush and tingle through every nerve. Why was that word and the men's speech so familiar to him? He walked moodily home, and all night he lay tossing and sleepless, pursuing a shadowy something which was ever within his reach and yet which ever evaded him.

Early next morning he was up and down on the wharf listening to the talk of the west-country sailors. Every word they spoke seemed to him to revive his memory and bring him nearer to the light. From time to time they paused in their work, and seeing the white-haired stranger sitting so silently and attentively, they laughed at him and broke little jests upon him. And even these jests had a familiar sound to the exile, as they very well might, seeing that they were the same which he had heard in his youth, for no one ever makes a new joke in England. So he sat through the long day, bathing himself in the west-country speech and waiting for the light to break.

And it happened that when the sailors broke off for their mid-day meal, one of them, either out of curiosity or good-nature, came over to the old watcher and greeted him. So John asked him to be seated on a log by his side and began to put many questions to him about the country from which he came, and the town. All which the man answered glibly enough, for there is nothing in the world that a sailor loves to talk of so much as of his native place, for it pleases him to show that he is no mere wanderer, but that he has a home to receive him whenever he shall choose to settle down to a quiet life. So the seaman prattled away about the Town Hall and the Martello Tower, and the Esplanade, and Pitt Street and the High Street, until his companion suddenly shot out a long eager arm and caught him by the wrist. 'Look here, man,' he said in a low quick whisper. 'Answer me truly as you hope for mercy. Are not the streets that run out of the High Street, Fox Street, Caroline Street, and George Street, in the order named?' 'They are,' the sailor answered, shrinking away from the wild flashing eyes. And at that moment John's memory came back to him, and he saw clear and distinct his life as it had been and as it should have been, with every minutest detail traced as in letters of fire. Too stricken to cry out, too stricken to weep, he could only hurry away homewards wildly and aimlessly; hurry as fast as his aged limbs would carry him, as if, poor soul! there were some chance yet of catching up the fifty years which had gone by. Staggering and tremulous

he hastened on until a film seemed to gather over his eyes, and throwing his arms into the air with a great cry, 'Oh, Mary, Mary! Oh, my lost, lost life!' he fell senseless upon the pavement.

The storm of emotion which had passed through him, and the mental shock which he had undergone, would have sent many a man into a raging fever, but John was too strong-willed and too practical to allow his strength to be wasted at the very time when he needed it most. Within a few days he realised a portion of his property, and starting for New York, caught the first mail steamer to England. Day and night, night and day, he trod the quarter-deck, until the hardy sailors watched the old man with astonishment, and marvelled how any human being could do so much upon so little sleep. It was only by this unceasing exercise, by wearing down his vitality until fatigue brought lethargy, that he could prevent himself from falling into a very frenzy of despair. He hardly dared ask himself what was the object of this wild journey? What did he expect? Would Mary be still alive? She must be a very old woman. If he could but see her and mingle his tears with hers he would be content. Let her only know that it had been no fault of his, and that they had both been victims to the same cruel fate. The cottage was her own, and she had said that she would wait for him there until she heard from him. Poor lass, she had never reckoned on such a wait as this.

At last the Irish lights were sighted and passed, Land's End lay like a blue fog upon the water, and the great steamer ploughed its way along the bold Cornish coast until it dropped its anchor in Plymouth Bay. John hurried to the railway station, and within a few hours he found himself back once more in his native town, which he had quitted a poor cork-cutter, half a century before.

But was it the same town? Were it not for the name engraved all over the station and on the hotels, John might have found a difficulty in believing it. The broad, well-paved streets, with the tram lines laid down the centre, were very different from the narrow winding lanes which he could remember. The spot upon which the station had been built was now the very centre of the town, but in the old days it would have been far out in the fields. In every direction, lines of luxurious villas branched away in streets and crescents bearing names which were new to the exile. Great warehouses, and long rows of shops with glittering fronts, showed him how enormously Brisport had increased in wealth as well as in dimensions. It was only when he came upon

the old High Street that John began to feel at home. It was much altered but still it was recognisable, and some few of the buildings were just as he had left them. There was the place where Fairbairn's cork works had been. It was now occupied by a great brand-new hotel. And there was the old grey Town Hall. The wanderer turned down beside it, and made his way with eager steps but a sinking heart in the direction of the line of cottages which he used to know so well.

It was not difficult for him to find where they had been. The sea at least was as of old, and from it he could tell where the cottages had stood. But alas, where were they now! In their place an imposing crescent of high stone houses reared their tall front to the beach. John walked wearily down past their palatial entrances, feeling heart-sore and despairing, when suddenly a thrill shot through him, followed by a warm glow of excitement and of hope, for, standing a little back from the line, and looking as much out of place as a bumpkin in a ball-room, was an old white-washed cottage, with wooden porch and walls bright with creeping plants. He rubbed his eyes and stared again, but there it stood with its diamond-paned windows and white muslin curtains, the very same down to the smallest details, as it had been on the day when he last saw it. Brown hair had become white, and fishing hamlets had changed into cities, but busy hands and a faithful heart had kept granny's cottage unchanged and ready for the wanderer.

And now, when he had reached his very haven of rest, John Huxford's mind became more filled with apprehension than ever, and he came over so deadly sick, that he had to sit down upon one of the beach benches which faced the cottage. An old fisherman was perched at one end of it, smoking his black clay pipe, and he remarked upon the wan face and sad eyes of the stranger.

'You have overtired yourself,' he said. 'It doesn't do for old chaps like you and me to forget our years.'

'I'm better now, thank you,' John answered. 'Can you tell me, friend, how that one cottage came among all those fine houses?'

'Why,' said the old fellow, thumping his crutch energetically upon the ground, 'that cottage belongs to the most obstinate woman in all England. That woman, if you'll believe me, has been offered the price of the cottage ten times over, and yet she won't part with it. They have even promised to remove it stone



by stone, and put it up on some more convenient place, and pay her a good round sum into the bargain, but, God bless you! she wouldn't so much as hear of it.'

'And why was that?' asked John.

'Well, that's just the funny part of it. It's all on account of a mistake. You see her spark went away when I was a youngster, and she's got it into her head that he may come back some day, and that he won't know where to go unless the cottage is there. Why, if the fellow were alive he would be as old as you, but I've no doubt he's dead long ago. She's well quit of him, for he must have been a scamp to abandon her as he did.'

'Oh, he abandoned her, did he?'

'Yes—went off to the States and never so much as sent a word to bid her good-bye. It was a cruel shame, it was, for the girl has been a-waiting and a-pining for him ever since. It's my belief that it's fifty years' weeping that blinded her.'

'She is blind!' cried John, half-rising to his feet.

'Worse than that,' said the fisherman. 'She's mortal ill and not expected to live. Why, look ye, there's the doctor's carriage a-waiting at her door.'

At this evil tidings old John sprang up and hurried over to the cottage, where he met the physician returning to his brougham.

'How is your patient, doctor?' he asked in a trembling voice.

'Very bad, very bad,' said the man of medicine, pompously. 'If she continues to sink she will be in great danger; but if, on the other hand, she takes a turn it is possible that she may recover,' with which oracular answer he drove away in a cloud of dust.

John Huxford was still hesitating at the doorway, not knowing how to announce himself, or how far a shock might be dangerous to the sufferer, when a gentleman in black came bustling up.

'Can you tell me, my man, if this is where the sick woman is?' he asked.

John nodded, and the clergyman passed in leaving the door half-open. The wanderer waited until he had gone into the inner room and then slipped into the front parlour, where he had spent so many happy hours. All was the same as ever, down to the smallest ornaments, for Mary had been in the habit whenever anything was broken of replacing it with a duplicate, so that there might be no change in the room. He stood irresolute, looking about him, until he heard a woman's voice from the inner chamber, and stealing to the door he peeped in.

The invalid was reclining upon a couch, propped up with pillows, and her face was turned full towards John as he looked round the door. He could have cried out as his eyes rested upon it, for there were Mary's pale, plain, sweet homely features as smooth and as unchanged as though she were still the half child, half woman, whom he had pressed to his heart on the Brisport quay. Her calm, eventless, unselfish life had left none of those rude traces upon her countenance which are the outward emblems of internal conflict and an unquiet soul. A chaste melancholy had refined and softened her expression, and her loss of sight had been compensated for by that placidity which comes upon the faces of the blind. With her silvery hair peeping out beneath her snow-white cap, and a bright smile upon her sympathetic face, she was the old Mary improved and developed, with something ethereal and angelic superadded.

'You will keep a tenant in the cottage,' she was saying to the clergyman, who sat with his back turned to the observer. 'Choose some poor deserving folk in the parish who will be glad of a home free. And when he comes you will tell him that I have waited for him until I have been forced to go on, but that he will find me on the other side still faithful and true. There's a little money too—only a few pounds—but I should like him to have it when he comes, for he may need it, and then you will tell the folk you put in to be kind to him, for he will be grieved, poor lad, and to tell him that I was cheerful and happy up to the end. Don't let him know that I ever fretted, or he may fret too.'

Now John listened quietly to all this from behind the door, and more than once he had to put his hand to his throat, but when she had finished, and when he thought of her long, blameless, innocent life, and saw the dear face looking straight at him and yet unable to see him, it became too much for his manhood, and he burst out into an irrepressible choking sob which shook his very frame. And then occurred a strange thing, for though he had spoken no word, the old woman stretched out her arms to him, and cried, 'Oh, Johnny, Johnny! Oh dear, dear Johnny, you have come back to me again,' and before the parson could at all understand what had happened, those two faithful lovers were in each other's arms, weeping over each other and patting each other's silvery heads, with their hearts so full of joy that it almost compensated for all that weary fifty years of waiting.

It is hard to say how long they rejoiced together. It seemed

a very short time to them and a very long one to the reverend gentleman, who was thinking at last of stealing away, when Mary recollected his presence and the courtesy which was due to him. 'My heart is full of joy, sir,' she said; 'it is God's will that I should not see my Johnny, but I can call his image up as clear as if I had my eyes. Now stand up, John, and I will let the gentleman see how well I remember you. He is as tall, sir, as the second shelf, as straight as an arrow, his face brown, and his eyes bright and clear. His hair is well-nigh black and his moustache the same—I shouldn't wonder if he had whiskers as well by this time. Now, sir, don't you think I can do without my sight?' The clergyman listened to her description, and looking at the battered, white-haired man before him, he hardly knew whether to laugh or to cry.

But it all proved to be a laughing matter in the end, for, whether it was that her illness had taken some natural turn, or that John's return had startled it away, it is certain that from that day Mary steadily improved until she was as well as ever. 'No special licence for me' John had said sturdily. 'It looks as if we were ashamed of what we are doing, as though we hadn't the best right to be married of any two folk in the parish.' So the banns were put up accordingly, and three times it was announced that John Huxford, bachelor, was going to be united to Mary Merton, spinster, after which no one objecting, they were duly married accordingly. 'We may not have very long in this world,' said old John, 'but at least we shall start fair and square in the next.'

John's share in the Quebec business was sold out, and gave rise to a very interesting legal question as to whether, knowing that his name was Huxford, he could still sign that of Hardy, as was necessary for the completion of the business. It was decided, however, that on his producing two trustworthy witnesses to his identity all would be right, so the property was duly realised and produced a very handsome fortune. Part of this John devoted to building a pretty villa just outside Brisport, and the heart of the proprietor of Beach Terrace leaped within him when he learned that the cottage was at last to be abandoned, and that it would no longer break the symmetry and impair the effect of his row of aristocratic mansions.

And there in their snug new home, sitting out on the lawn in the summer-time, and on either side of the fire in the winter, that

worthy old couple continued for many years to live as innocently and as happily as two children. Those who knew them well say that there was never a shadow between them, and that the love which burned in their aged hearts was as high and as holy as that of any young couple who ever went to the altar. And through all the country round, if ever man or woman were in distress and fighting against hard times, they had only to go up to the villa to receive help, and that sympathy which is more precious than help. So when at last John and Mary fell asleep in their ripe old age, within a few hours of each other, they had all the poor and the needy and the friendless of the parish among their mourners, and in talking over the troubles which these two had faced so bravely, they learned that their own miseries also were but passing things, and that faith and truth can never miscarry, either in this existence or the next.

## *NOTES BY A NATURALIST.*

### THE BADGER AND THE FOX.

OF the few animals which now inhabit the woods and the hill-sides, perhaps the badger is the least known to the general public. He is nocturnal, in the first place; and his colouring, being in broken tones, does not readily arrest the eye. His head, chin, and neck are white, with brownish-black bands running on either side from the nose over the eyes and ears. His upper parts are light-grey sprinkled with black, the lower parts brownish-black; his fore-feet are long and stout, his limbs muscular, his jaw powerful, and his teeth sharp; in fact he is well set up as far as these formidable weapons are concerned. The usual length of the animal is a little over three feet, but in his family, as well as in the human race, there are large and small individuals. Take his general appearance as he jogs along, and a small bear is at once suggested to your mind. Many of his ways, too, are bear-like; he will lie up in the winter, and eat vegetable as well as animal food. Some other creatures, that are supposed to be strictly carnivorous, will eat fruit when they can get it.

The badger, poor beast! is getting scarce; more's the pity, from the animal collector's and the naturalist's point of view. He generally manages to dispense with the observation of the latter; for, unless his ways are well known, he will escape from a place that might have been supposed strong enough to hold a rhinoceros. All his family have been excavators from the beginning, on the most scientific principles. Unless you take the greatest possible precautions, he will dig himself out and get away in quick time. He is a most quiet and orderly being, and a contented one too, if let alone; for, as a rule, he is fat.

His persecutors are many, from the keeper down to the rat-catcher's lad, who boasts that he has 'the best dog at any varmint as ever run on four legs.' Some of our common expressions require alteration, being founded on ignorance. For instance, folks say, 'Dirty as a badger'; whereas a cleaner creature in its home and surroundings would be hard to find. A very wide-awake individual he is; and he needs be, for the hand of both man and of boy is against him, and utterly without reason.

If the badger had but the same privileges extended to him that the fox has, he would not be so rare an animal as he is now. Why should he be so worried by dogs? It is to be hoped that badger-drawing has nearly had its day. This very practice, brutal as it is, testifies to his determined courage and fighting qualities; you could not find a more determined antagonist than he is when on his mettle.

With regard to his food, the greater part of it consists of such small deer as may fall in his way, when he wanders here and there in the evening after leaving the hole where he has lain dormant all the day. That long snout of his will poke and root out all manner of things, from a wild bees' nest to a field-mouse. He will eat young rabbits when he can get them, and old ones do not come amiss to him when the chance offers. A sporting character I knew once, procured a fine badger for the express purpose of having him baited by all the fancy dogs in his locality. Amongst other creatures he kept rabbits, and his particular fancy was to have the very best of the lop-eared variety that could be procured. One doe he valued most highly, because, setting aside her own qualities, she had a fine lot of young ones, well-grown, and as beautiful as herself.

The badger had only been caught the same evening on which it was brought to this individual. Not having a place ready for it, he placed it for the time in an empty hutch just over the one in which his favourite doe and her little ones were. Fastening the door securely, he left the animal to his own devices for the night, little thinking what these might be. Next morning he found, to his horror, that the badger had torn up the floor of the hutch where he had been placed, and got into that of the doe, where he had slaughtered the whole family. Their bodies lay dead there, the badger curled up in the middle of them, fast asleep, and very full of rabbit. His first impulse was to kill the beast, there and then, but on thinking it over he remembered that he had paid a considerable figure for it; so he got the badger out and sold him to one of his friends as a pet, telling him that it was 'quite harmless, would live on bread and milk, and in a very short time would follow him about like a dog.' Very soon, indeed, he was requested by this friend to take him back again, but he refused.

I will describe one of his homes, which I have visited many times. At the bottom of a glade, by the side of the chalk hill, is a dip or hollow, not deep, but a kind of basin about twice the size

of one of my living-rooms. Round this, old beeches, growing close by, have pushed forth their great roots in all directions ; on one side of the hollow a gnarled oak stands, not any great height, but of vast bulk, the great limbs reaching far over the open space. In the middle of the hollow, under the roots of this oak, our friar of orders grey has made his home, and a very secure and pleasant one it is.

When the moon is high up in the sky, and throws a soft silvery blue tone on the tops of the firs which line the side of the glade, the glade itself showing like a bright blue green stripe, and nothing is heard but the jar of the fern-owl as he flits over the glade, or the drone of some beetle as he flies along, then is the time for our friend the badger to come out and see how the world looks in the moonlight.

He has left his hole, and there he stands in the full light of the moon, the great limbs of the oak throwing chequered shadows around him on the greensward and on the exposed surface of the chalk here and there. The greater portion of the sides of the hollow nearest his home is covered with foxgloves and trailing bramble. He looks round about him for a few seconds, and sniffs, just to find out if anything peculiar is in the air ; then, finding matters all right, as he thinks, he gives himself a scratch or two and a good shake, and deliberately waddles off to get something to eat ; a very easy matter at this time of the year, for on a warm summer night all kinds of creatures are about, and he makes their acquaintance much to his own satisfaction, if not to theirs.

Little does he think that he is wanted on this particular evening. Whilst he goes plodding along, picking up a little bit here and there, the keeper and his lad are holding some conversation about him. I happen to come across them ; my sympathies are with the badger, but it is not my business to interfere.

‘Have ye got the bag and sack, Jim ? If ye have, jest make yer way, quiet like, over t’other hill, an’ cum down the side on it, on the quiet, mind ; fix yer bag, an’ when ’tis done, give three hoots, one arter t’other, to let me know as things is all right ; ye minds what I tell ye ; I’m goin’ back to get Ginger an’ Nipper. They’ll hussle him up, an’ no mistake. They ain’t big uns, but better tarriers than what they be never cum inter this ’ere world. Now then, off ye goes, an’ before ye gits yer job done I shall be near to ye, fur to hear ye hoot : he’s sartin sure to be on the ramble.’



Arriving at the spot, Jim produces the bag, or rather a small sack, from his jacket pocket, and places it in the entrance to the badger's burrow in such a way that should the animal rush for home, as he generally does when alarmed, he will go right into it. The string that runs round the mouth of the sack will be pulled tight by the force of his rush, and there he will be like a pig in a poke. The string of the bag is secured, of course, to a peg. Having arranged all this to his own satisfaction, Jim picks up the large sack—he had two, a large and a small—walks out of the hollow on to the moonlit greensward, and hoots like a brown owl, three times. After this musical effort he stands quite still, and listens intently, but for some time the humming jar of the fern-owl, *chur-chur-er-er-er-chur*, is the only sound that reaches his ear. Suddenly he places his empty sack on the ground beside him, and is on the alert, for a sound of quickly moving feet at a distance makes itself heard. He knows what that means: Ginger and Nipper are close on the badger's track; and like the well-bred, well-trained little fox terriers that they are, they run him mute, save for the mere ghost of a whimper now and again, just enough to show they are eager to close with the poor beast.

That, however, is far from the keeper's intention; he would not let his two little beauties, game though they are, close with such a desperate antagonist as an old dog badger, if he could help it; for he knows well enough that dogs and badger would fight to the death. His plan is that they shall drive him to his burrow, and into the sack.

The best laid plans do not succeed always, however, as is proved in this case. Nearer and nearer comes the sound of pattering feet at full speed, and behind that the heavy tread of a man who is putting his best foot foremost. Nearer they come; they will break into the moonlight in another moment; we can hear them pant, for they have run him through the cover at top speed. The lad is ready to dash down into the hollow; in fact he has already moved to do so, when the sound of running feet stops dead; and then, in the thicket, a desperate tearing scuffle is heard going on, for Ginger and Nipper have run into and closed with him before he could reach home.

The sounds make Jim wild with excitement, and he shouts his loudest to the keeper, who is now close at hand and puffing like a steam-engine with running so hard.

'Can't ye git a badger in a sack without hollerin' like murder?' he asks, angrily. 'I'm a good mind——'

What he'd a good mind to did not transpire, for the boy yelled out, 'I ain't got him; they'se got him; don't ye hear 'em worryin' of him?'

Making use of some very strong expressions, such as he would not make use of at a chapel tea-meeting, the keeper dashes into the thicket, followed by Jim; quickly they reach the spot, where they see a confused mass of living matter, turning and twisting, growling, whining and snapping, at their feet.

'I'll murder ye, you old varmint! Look out, Jim! Cuss an' hang him! I can't git a stroke at him! Why the—— here they are; what's up now? Ginger! Ginger! loose him! Ginger! he'll rip ye up in bits. Let me smash him!'

'Here he is; hold hard, master! ye nearly had 'im; hold hard!'

'Well, if ever I take my tarriers! Oh, dear! oh, dear! if there ain't Nipper; he's done for. Hold him, Jim; don't ye let him out o' yer arms, fur mercy sake. Now then, here they are; now fur it, one way or t'other. This is the wust night's work as ever I come across. Jim! Jim! where be ye?'

'In this 'ere tangle; I'm comin' fast as I can.'

'Have ye got Nipper?'

'Yes, I got un.'

'He's a dunner, ain't he?'

'No, he ain't; it's tight work fur me to hold him!'

'Don't ye let him go; here they be, dead as herrins! Oh, dear, Ginger! if I ain't wound up clean! Never agin will I see your feller. If it waunt fur the shame on it, I could fairly beller! I be cut up, an' no mistake.'

'Pick him up, master! you'll hev to loose his holt, for dead as he be he's got him under the ear. This ere night's work about winds my pig up, I can tell ye.'

Picking Ginger up, and holding him in his arms, the keeper stood in silence. Presently a slight movement took place in the body of the terrier, and with a low whimper and one long-drawn breath he opened his eyes, and then licked the face of his master.

'Jim! hoora! hoora! Ginger's alive; oh, my precious Ginger! oh, ain't you tore about! Give us Nipper, an' shove that cusnation warmint in the sack, an' let's git back fur to doctor these 'ere poor things. We'll git 'em round, if 'tis to be done.—

Look 'ere, Jim, did ye ever? they ain't hurt much; they're tryin' their werry hardest ter get out o' my hands ter hev another go at him! I don't think as there's sich another pair o' tarriers as these 'ere two, no, not nowheres: there can't be! Ye've got that murderin' warmint?'

'Yes, he's in the sack.'

'Then look sharp! we'll cut out o' this; come on! an' next time as master wants a badger fur one o' his friends, somebody else's tarriers 'll hev to drive un. The fust one as we got out was that old warmint's missus an' her cubs. That was a diggin' job, as we wunt forgit in a hurry; 'twas desprit work. But this 'ere bit o' business sets that aside clean. Jim! what are ye sniggerin' about? what's in the wind now, ticklin' yer fancy that way?'

'Oh, nuthin' pertickler. Is Ginger an' Nipper quiet?'

'No, they ain't; I thinks as they'd like ter fall foul o' that ere sack.'

'Well, I dessay they wud; fur this 'ere warmint has cum round agin, an' is tearin' an' scratchin' like mad. It do take a lot to wind a badger's clock up, that it do!'

'Jim, when we've sin to the dogs, you come up an' hev a pint o' the best cider.'

#### THE FOX.

I feel it almost presumptuous on my part to say anything about that wonderful animal, the fox. So much has been written and said about him, both by sportsmen and some of the greatest of our literary geniuses. My account of him will be brief; not having the fox-hunter's feeling of veneration for him, nor the hatred natural to the poultry-keeper, my views will at any rate not be one-sided. Nor have I ever had the least wish to possess Master Reynard embalmed as a mummy, or to see the wily gentleman in a glass case, lean and hungry-looking, with squinting cunning in his eye. He is known to me as a clean, swift, strong, and handsome creature, full of courage. He is also universally credited with a very large amount of intellectual power, although it is always said to be employed exclusively for his own benefit. To call an individual of the human family an old fox is certainly not a compliment, for it implies that he is crafty and selfish.

His usual length is four feet, but he varies in size according to food and locality. In the Highlands of Scotland he is *almost* like a wolf in size and strength; and he is not regarded in the

same light as in England, for he is shot down without the least compunction there. The proper place to see all wild animals to advantage is in their own home. May I be allowed to say that, in this respect, they are unlike many individuals of the human species?

It is just after four o'clock on a soft May morning, and the sun lights up the tops of the trees, bringing the tender foliage out in sparkling relief against the hill-sides. At the foot of the one nearest us Reynard and his vixen partner have their home. Numbers of fine beeches grow here; the chalky soil is well suited to them. A large one has been blown down at some time, but it has been sawn from the roots long ago. For a long distance the soil was loosened in its fall, and Reynard has taken advantage of this to form an earth for himself and family among the loosened chalk, stones, and old tangled roots. The surface round about is covered with the finest and greenest turf. Many hawthorn bushes are there, giving out their delightful fragrance to perfection, for the morning is warm. On the end of a long beech bough, which reaches far out over the earth, a cuckoo sits, and flirts his tail about, shouting 'Cuckoo! Cuckoo!' The entrance to the earth and a small space about it is bare, for the little foxes are playful animals, and are at high jinks often, capering about. At present they are, comparatively speaking, quiet, for all their bellies are full. Father Reynard is sitting in the bright warm sunlight, winking in a most knowing manner, while two of his cubs play with his bushy tail to their hearts' content, tossing it from one side to the other in a most comical fashion. Mother vixen has a rabbit in her mouth, which she tosses up and catches, and then lets drop for one of the young ones to nibble at its ears, while the darling of the family torments a poor frog that has found his way there. The whole lot look as though they had a touch of dropsy, their bellies stick out so. The feathers and feet of pheasants strew the ground, and other remnants, for Reynard's motto is, 'Other creatures' young ones can cry for food if they let 'em; but mine don't, if I know it.'

At some distance the alarm note of a blackbird sounds. Reynard opens his eyes, pricks his ears, and the cubs leave off playing with his tail. The next moment a jay squeaks out, and comes flying overhead. That is enough; he is up on his feet, ears erected, eyes gleaming, and his brush held almost in a line with his back, his fore feet well to the front, the hind ones on the

spring. Squeak! squeak! and another jay flits past. With a rush the cubs dash to earth, followed more leisurely by their worthy parents. The cause of their stampede is soon explained, for up the side of the wooded slope a man is seen coming; it is the keeper on his early round.

Reynard is very accommodating as to his food; nothing nice comes amiss to him: game of all kinds, furred and feathered; fish, when he can get the run of them in spawning time, when they are on the sides of the shallows; field-mice, and his especial dainty, a well-fed barn rat. There is no lack of these in the harvest time, and up to the commencement of the winter months. Then they troop back to their old quarters for the cold season. He has a taste for poultry; ducks he values most highly. Perhaps no one but a miller would expect to find a fox in a swamp; but he knows his tricks and likings, and, though he curses him most heartily, yet lets him go free, for is he not St. Reynard? The miller's landlord hunts him in the orthodox manner.

On the tussocks, covered with flag and rush spread all over the swamp, the fox makes a most comfortable retreat. Getting into the middle of one, he twists himself round and round, dog fashion, and there he lies on a nice bed, soft and dry, completely hidden from view, remaining there until the miller informs his landlord's keeper that a fox is there; then the huntsman comes round—and the sooner he does this the better, or there will not be a duck left on the pond.

Reynard can hear them nozzling and softly quacking at the edge of his hiding-place; with cat-like steps he creeps closer, looking through the flags. When he finds that he is near enough for a jump, there is a splash, and one low quack and the drake is in his mouth. In pictures you may see him represented with his quarry slung over his back. This is not correct; he carries what he has caught in front of him, like a retriever. More than once, when in search of wading birds, have I come on the retreats of the fox and the otter very near to each other. For cool impudence, match him if you can. I have known a dog fox, when the vixen had the care of a family, enter the yard of the keeper's house, take one of his game hens from under his living-room windows, march off with it across the road and to his home, give it to his family, and then come back for another. A pointer was in the yard at the time, chained to his kennel. Driven off at his second visit, he coolly re-crossed the road to the turf, squatted on

his haunches there, and looked over at the yard, and the game hens used for hatching out the pheasants' eggs. It was too much for the keeper to put up with. Slipping a cartridge into his gun, he swung it up to his shoulder and let drive at the fox, saying, 'there's notice to quit, you thund'rin' sweep!' Then did Master Reynard play some extraordinary antics. First he jumped off the ground several times in the most lively manner, then he cuffed his ears vigorously with his fore-feet, gave a bit of a yelp, and bolted at top speed. His skin is thick, and what would knock other things over would not cripple him.

When the hunters and the hounds chevvy him across the fields honest farmer Giles complains most bitterly. 'Dash my old gaiters, if I doan't wish as every warmint of a fox as ever run was cold and stiff; that I do; an' 'tis a pity as some folks ain't got better work for their hosses than ridin' over other people's craps an' breakin' fences an' gates. 'Tis wonderful what a likin' most of 'em have fur blunderin' thru a fence an' knockin' the padlock off a gate. Why doan't they jump over 'em? ef their hearts was as big as their hosses hap they wud. That there field of turmits will be punched inter sheep feed, they wunt want to go inter no cuttin' machine. Cuss all fox huntin'! I sez; 'tis ruin for farmers!'

It was wonderful how quickly farmer Giles was brought to modify these strong opinions on fox-hunting by the appearance of a two-gallon bottle labelled Old Irish, 'with the Hunt's compliments.' He uncorked the bottle, smelt and tasted it more than once, with and without sugar, ejaculating between each sip, 'Massy, oh alive!' Then he walked to those fields again over which they had ridden. Could it have been the softening influence of the Old Irish, or had he been making mountains out of molehills? for when he got back he told his 'missus,' with a beaming smile of benevolence on his face, that, 'Raly, considerin' the lot o' gentlemen as 'ad rid over the craps, the little harm as he cum across waunt wuth speekin' on.'

### IN A GERMAN EMIGRANT-SHIP.

HAVING booked our places in the S.S. 'Frankfort,' leaving B—— in November 188—, we were directed to the emigrants' hotel, and were accommodated with a very narrow room containing two beds and a deal table which scarcely left any space to squeeze through, so that I was obliged to scramble over the beds when I wanted to pass my friend. The room was cold but clean, and the icy water in the morning was quite a treat to wash in. The morning before we started we went to have our baggage measured, our ticket giving us about three cubic feet for both of us for luggage. The scene was very animated, as another ship was leaving for New York at the same time as ours for South America, and the station was swarming with emigrants, mostly Bohemians. Our own companions we could, of course, not distinguish from the others, but next morning we found that they numbered only thirteen or fourteen, the greater part being a family of Germans from Sarastoff in Russia, where their ancestors had been settled for more than a hundred years. They looked very dirty and stupid in their Russian costume and cut of beard and hair, and only on board did we find out that they were so interesting. We talked to them there because we took them for Russians, and thought we could practise the language, but we soon found out that, though they understood it, they disliked speaking it, because they seem to keep very strictly separated from the Russians in their colony, and live like patriarchs. The other fellow-passengers were a few girls from Vienna and some young German merchants. The first-class passengers remained invisible till we were far out at sea.

On the morning of our departure we rose at 5 A.M., and found the hotel bill to be very modest, the landlord being a regular prototype of an old German *Herbergsvater*. He had given us advice as to our equipment, every emigrant being obliged to take his own bed (we took a couple of good broad campaign blankets, such as are used in the British army) and his own eating utensils. These are a tin cup fitting into a strange kind of dish, the upper part of which is for potatoes and covers a plate for meat, which in its turn covers a soup tureen, with a handle like a bucket, by



which you carry the whole affair when fetching your dinner from the kitchen. We were transported gratis by the company to the harbour-town in the third class, but for the time kept to ourselves and observed the others, who did not come near us because we conversed in Italian. In the harbour-town the agent, who took us both for first-class passengers—I don't know why—led us to an elegant carriage with two horses, and drove us off with our luggage in grand style. We waited about an hour, when the others arrived in a tramway, and we were marched off on to a steam-tug, which took us on board far out because of a dense fog, which the steamer wanted to avoid, at least in shallow water. On board we were surprised at a steward carrying our traps into a decent but simple little cabin, and so we protested, saying we had only emigrants' tickets. He seemed rather disgusted at having taken so much trouble about us, and now allowed us to carry our things with our own hands into the proper place, a kind of dirty saloon, without the least pretence to elegance or comfort, and provided with rows upon rows of berths in two storeys. The first glance at these was, to tell the truth, rather violently disgusting, nor was the disgust lessened by finding all the iron and wooden railings and sides of the beds so very recently painted white that anything touching them was instantly soiled, and the darkness was at first too intense to avoid contact. When we got accustomed to the gloom we found that the bed-places contained only straw sacks of a very doubtful colour. The beds were arranged for two and two, but without any partitions higher than the mattresses, so that, lying on the top storey, you could have overlooked the whole concern had it not been for the darkness. However, we found even this amusing after the first five minutes, and I at once chose what I saw would be the best place for my friend and myself—that was the top storey nearest the staircase, the lightest in the place, quite sufficiently so in the bright climes near the Canary Islands, though not in the foggy North Sea. I saw at once that the draught from the doors close to us would be trying at first, but I was right in judging that this very draught would be worth anything in the hot climates we were going to. We arranged our trunks as close to our beds as we could, packing them tighter than they had been, so that we could leave a small box empty and use it for all the small objects of daily use. Thus we felt pretty well prepared. The scanty number of our fellow-passengers had taken berths not very far from ours, and I felt rather glad that

our German Russians had been stowed away a little apart from the rest, as they really did not look at all inviting ; moreover they had about half-a-dozen children with them. We had scarcely got our things in order when a bell rang, which we guessed was for dinner, we being now already far from the vanishing land. So off we marched with our tins to the kitchen, where we found their various partitions useful for receiving pea-soup, boiled meat, and potatoes in their skins, with a large slice of rather good white bread. The rest was not very savoury, but was plentiful, and probably nourishing enough. In the evening we got only tea, if such it could be called, oceans of water with a very few tea-leaves swimming about in it, and the same bread as before, with what they called butter, a disgusting compound which I only tasted once and have refused ever since. I observed a very marked inclination in all—officers, stewards, &c.—to lord it over us, and treat us generally like prisoners, which I at once openly resisted, and very successfully too, at least as far as it concerned myself and five or six of the more intelligent passengers. In the morning coffee was served out, still weaker than the tea, with bread, which left only one substantial meal a day. The night was not quiet, the female passengers being all sick, which, however, did not at all disturb us, and one German persisted in cracking jokes rather too plentifully at the unusual situation, which, as we were comfortably rolled in all our blankets and shawls—a mode of sleeping we had practised in the hotel—did not, however, prevent us from sleeping some five hours.

The next day the vessel tossed heavily, and I did not escape a short sickness, but was able to eat with appetite half an hour afterwards, while most of the others left their dinners almost untouched. In spite of this I remarked that the slices of boiled meat had considerably diminished in size, so I went with a German passenger to the paymaster, and the effect of our remonstrance lasts to this day. I forgot to say that we were expected to fetch the coffee and tea in our machines, which we consequently had to wash thrice a day ourselves in the washhouse. We were not unprepared for this, and had taken towels and wash-leather on purpose ; but other passengers had not been so provident, and the steward would not assist them. We afterwards found that the ship ought to provide the emigrants with blankets as well as with tin plates and cups, but the stewards are instructed not to say so before the ship touches Spain, to save the trouble of distributing

the things thrice. The washing went well enough as far as Antwerp, but since then we were no longer allowed to fetch hot water. At Antwerp some sixty French and Belgian emigrants came on board, and the noise of their children, luggage, and the loading of cargo all day and night was enough to teach the most nervous of men how to sleep in any imaginable noise ever after. But at first the Frenchmen kept up such a hubbub that even we could not sleep. They were, however, all cleanly-looking folk, and were therefore allowed to take their berths near us—women, men, girls and children, all of a heap, according to their own wishes—nearly all being families. The rolling in the Channel and the Bay of Biscay is heavy enough to prevent writing, as we are not admitted to the saloon, and have no room of our own in which it might be possible to do so. I write sitting on deck, holding my slips of paper on my knee, the only possible way.

We had got well used to our life by the time we reached La Coruña, which is very beautifully situated, and looked doubly so under a bright full moon on the evening of our arrival. We arranged with a boy to fetch us next morning with a sailing-boat. He looked exactly like a Neapolitan lazzarone, and I understood his Spanish dialect so well that I was quite astonished. He, too, seemed to understand every word we said. Besides enjoying a plentiful meal on shore, the change seeming very much better than it really was, by contrast, we wandered through the town, and were delighted at finding it so like an Italian provincial town, and so pretty and bright in the beginning of December. We bought and took on board a provision of tinned *mortadella* (a kind of Bologna sausage) and a good many apples and oranges, to vary the monotony of our coffee, soup, and tea, and have since felt very glad we did so. We sailed back to the ship in the afternoon, but finding it far from ready to start, I insisted on sailing over to the opposite shore to Castel St. Antonio, and enjoyed it immensely. When we returned the Spanish emigrants were coming on board—a lot of regular southern-looking folks, with many women and children of different classes, on the whole nice quiet people, and as obliging as Italians, but whom the Germans on board treat like wild animals, for the simple reason that none, from the captain to the smallest cabin-boy, understands Spanish, except a Spanish cook whom they took on board at La Coruña, and who stands up like a man for his countrymen, and luckily can do a world of good, as he cooks for the emigrants, and the

other cook now serves the officers' and first-class passengers' mess. Since the Spaniards are on board our fare has changed for the better. Besides our dinner, at about 11.30, we have now a warm meal of rice and biscuits, or fish-soup or bean-soup, at 5 P.M., and both these meals are accompanied by half-a-pint of very decent Spanish wine, also taken on board at La Coruña; besides this, the tea and coffee as usual, with bread or biscuit. The only disagreeable change is that we are no longer allowed fresh water for washing, and as I wash napkins and towels every day, and sea-water is totally unfit for the purpose, even with the very best soap, I feel rather wild at it; so do the others; but it can't be helped, only I have made friends with the steward, so that every two or three days he wakes me at two in the morning and gives me a big tub of hot water, in which I wash everything I can, hanging it in the rigging to dry. I make my friend help me, and then we take a sea-bath under the pump (the sea-water is lukewarm now) and go to bed again quite happy. How one learns to appreciate small things in such a life! The first nights, with all the Spanish children mixing their howlings with those of the Belgian and Russian brats, were immensely amusing, and the whole saloon (!) looks like a bazaar with all the rags flying, and sounds like Babel or Bedlam. There are five other Italians on board, one being a Neapolitan coachman taking a horse to Monte Video. During the daytime I am continually in request to interpret Spanish to the Germans and Frenchmen, or *vice versâ*, or Neapolitan to the doctor, or even French to the officers, who scarcely understand even that. In return our box is always full of nuts and oranges; the Spaniards are offended if we don't accept them. The French people have never offered to give anything in return for our trouble; my friend knows as many languages as I do, and has quite as much to do. Time *flies* on board, notwithstanding I take always two hours' siesta, and am growing stout and rosy. Of course the Spaniards dance and sing a good deal from morning till night, and were scarcely on board when I one day found five little girls in one bed singing something very like the Neapolitan *stornelli* at the top of their voices.

We have had very gentle rolling ever since we left Spain, after taking some eighty more emigrants on board at Villagarcia, which port is quite as pretty as La Coruña, but we were not allowed to go on shore, though we stayed six hours. Since we left we have only met one sailing-ship, and seen nothing but sky and water

and the fins of five small whales (at least the first officer said they were whales) in the distance. We have had extraordinarily fine weather since we left Santa Cruz and very favourable wind, with the exception of one day of calm weather, but life on board has changed considerably, and by now I have found out which are the better disposed among passengers, crew and officers. The captain is disliked by all, from the first officer to the last ship's chicken, almost, for even the horse bites him (and no one else), and his own dog, strange to say, likes all the other officers better than its master, though towards the passengers it is as savage as he. The real commander of the ship is the head-steward, whom all are afraid of, because he has been ten years on board, and therefore longer than the captain and half as long as the dog, who has never left the ship for eighteen years, even when it has been in repair, only the hull being now left of the original ship. Everyone knows that the steward has been the cause of about a dozen officers and one captain's being dismissed during the ten years, and he keeps up a system of prying into everybody's affairs which would long since have settled his account in any but a German ship. The captain is an extremely dull, brutal sort of fellow, who likes to bully everybody unnecessarily, and has never been known to treat anybody with kindness, even in trifles. He does not know a word of Spanish, though he has crossed the Atlantic dozens of times, and he swears at the Spaniards in German, for which he is laughed at openly, and retires disgusted. When he wants to bully anyone, he usually sends one officer after another with orders, long before the first order could possibly have been obeyed. The Spanish cook is the best of the lot, and his coming on board continues to change the fare very much for the better; the paymaster tries to economise by warning the Germans and French not to eat the five o'clock meal, which he says is only fit for Spaniards, though it is by far the best meal of the day.

The day before yesterday (December 8) was rather hot and the night hotter. It is impossible to describe the stifling air in the common saloon, but we slept like tops, and then were so poisoned that in the morning we were both incapable even of thinking until we had been revived by the air and sun. We have determined to sleep on deck, however the weather may turn out, and at present it promises to keep fair. Yesterday we found a nice quiet nook under the awning, and were innocent enough to occupy it before dark. Of course the captain removed us by means of no

fewer than three messages in one minute, brought by the fourth, third and second mates ; but we took up our quarters again in the dark, and slept very well indeed. This morning I politely thanked the captain for having allowed us to sleep so quietly all night in the same place which he had considered unfit for us the day before. I did this, because we had found a still better place, and, though he is fond of bullying, he is too stupid to put a stop to being chaffed in this manner, even by a third-class passenger. There is a very nice engineer who has known the ship ever since it was built, and who is delighted at anybody's daring to tease the captain. He said he would suggest a quantity of comfortable nooks where we could not be seen by the watch, and so I can continue to change places till the captain is tired of marking all the prohibited corners. My friend enjoys the sport too, and we sleep splendidly in the open air, wrapped in our blankets. The captain talked about using the pump to waken any stray sleepers, but he is too lazy to look about himself, and the officers dislike him too much to report. But I would rather risk a shower-bath than sleep down in the pestilential air of the saloon any longer.

Since the heat commenced life on board has changed. Towards evening the Spaniards, in small groups, dance and sing very like the workmen at Naples, only they dance well and with more violence ; but the singing is rather monotonous. The groups of women and children very much resemble those to be seen at Santa Lucia in Naples, quite as dirty and with the same occupations. The babies are quite as pretty and quite as dirty, and as many rows go on continually. Nobody on board is without personal enemies, and daily the strangest scenes are enacted, and new inventions made purposely to vex these enemies. Especially the Frenchmen seem to be the maddest of the lot, and there is a group of four—one young girl, a youth of twenty and his father, and another young man—who continually fight pitched battles in their narrow sleeping-places as soon as their fellow-passengers go on deck. In spite of the stifling air, most of the emigrants still sleep in the 'saloon,' only dozens of Spaniards lie about anywhere on deck and are not at all particular as to their resting-places, many snoring a pace off other groups dancing and singing and playing the tambourine. Now that we sleep in our shelter on deck we have more opportunity of observing the row going on there, but we are so used to it that we can fall asleep at any moment. At about 4.30 A.M. the



decks are washed, but first the pig-stye is cleaned, the pigs scampering all about meanwhile, running over the sleeping Spaniards, and even sometimes into the first-class saloon, grunting like mad. Our nook is over this saloon, and we were amused at the sailors, who did not care a bit where the pigs went.

The morning of December 11 began with what would have been a great excitement on any other ship but ours. One of the coal-bunkers—who have to drag the coals from the hold, between the glowing fire-tubes of the engine, to the furnace, a place so terribly hot that it would kill anyone not used to the work, and where even these poor people continually fall down fainting, and are forced to continue their work by blows from the iron shovels of the stokers—was missing, and as they have searched for him everywhere the whole morning without finding him, he is generally supposed to have purposely jumped overboard the day before, after dark. These men have four hours of this frightful work in the day and four in the night, and are always bullied in their hours of rest by the stokers, who make them fetch water and do all kinds of service. They can eat very little, because of the great heat they continually endure, and only receive thirty-six marks a month as pay; enough to make many a man commit suicide who is older than the lad missing, who was only seventeen. Nobody seems to care or think more of him than they did of the ox that was killed the day after for our dinners (it was half-dying already). By evening they had searched every nook in the ship for the boy, and are now all quite sure he is gone, and have already taken his chest to the captain's cabin. The captain swears a little, but does not seem to care a bit about the man, and still less about the treatment in the furnace-rooms. If a passenger was missing he would care still less. They made a list of the passengers according to the tickets, and off Spain counted all on board, but could not make the numbers tally, and gave it up as a bad job. It seems that they are serenely indifferent as to the individuality, nationality, age, &c. of their passengers. We had not even once to show our passports since we stepped into the first train. They say themselves that, if anyone is without a passport, they write one on a slip of paper and hand it to the Government on shore when they arrive at their destination, leaving it to the pleasure of the individual to prove who he is, or to go wherever he likes without his papers; if he turned out to be a runaway criminal, harm could only come to him, and never to the ship's captain or the secretary,



because they cannot be expected to know the passengers individually.

Santa Cruz was the prettiest of all the places I have seen since I was in Naples. Of course more than half of its impression was due to the contrast of life on board and life on shore, but it would charm anybody by its quiet smiling aspect in fine weather—no beggars or cripples like in La Coruña, scarcely any niggers; we only saw one in a butcher's shop, and one woman selling bananas in the market-place. Here was a profusion of fruit in heaps. We got more oranges for a *pareta* than we could carry on board alone (more than a hundred for one franc, that is), and had to buy a big basket for four sous, and have two little boys to take it to the boat, but as we served them all round they are fast diminishing, and will be gone long before we reach Monte Video. Next Tuesday we expect to cross the Line. We did not even see St. Vincent, where we first expected to stay, as we left it far to the east. I have just been in the hospital, helping the doctor with five Spaniards, most of them suffering from wounds received on shore. He treats nearly all such things with nitrate of silver, and the patients don't seem to mind the burning much. The doctor is good natured but not experienced, this being his first voyage (for which he gets 100 marks a month), just after having passed his examination. He says he will never sail again with a ship belonging to the —, and dislikes the captain as much as all the others do. One of the German girls has been sea-sick so long that they consented to give her better fare; rather too late, because she is now incapable of eating it; but I suppose she will recover on shore, as most sea-sick people do, and she was always well when she went on shore in Spain and at Teneriffe.

In Santa Cruz itself we could not see the Peak, but a few hours later it appeared, splendidly towering into the sky. But it was not what I thought it would be, as only the highest third of the mountain is peaked, all the rest having sides gradually sloping to the sea, less abruptly than even Vesuvius. Perhaps it is the prettiest from the other side. I was struck by the vegetation on the island, for it was not so tropical as I expected. Since we left the coast of Spain I have been deprived of my favourite recreation of looking at the sea-gulls, but in Santa Cruz a new species of very large dark birds followed us for about a day. Then we left them behind us, and since only two dark-brown, very elegantly-shaped sea-gulls have accompanied us, flying very

steadily, and not looking so eager and hungry as their European cousins. Besides, there is another small bird I never heard of, a sea-gull no bigger than a swallow, which for whole days and nights was the only one we ever saw; then there are hundreds upon hundreds of flying-fish, no bigger than herrings, which continually keep skimming the water for twenty to a hundred yards; one need only stand in the bows to see them dart away as the ship approaches. A few came on board the other night, and are now being smoked for the sailors, but they are too small to be worth keeping. Crossing the Line was not amusing; we crossed it at midnight on the 12th, and next morning the captain ordered the sailors to prepare and take part in a feast, but they flatly refused to have any merrymaking, saying that life on board did not dispose any of them to be merry, and still less so since it was ascertained that one of them was overboard. Besides, the day before crossing, and for two days after, it has been raining in torrents every two hours, and I have been sleeping soaked in the rain, because I could not bear to go into the 'saloon,' as we call it for fun, the stench being insufferable. It was rather hot rain, and in the morning I dried with a bathing-sheet, and hung up everything to dry near the engine, and felt very well all the day after.

By being so much in request to interpret the wishes of the Spaniards, mostly Galicians, I have found out a beautiful system the captain commands to be kept up for the hospital. He says, if better food is wanted for the sick, they are to have what remains of the first-class mess; if there are no remains, the sick are to have nothing at all. There were the wives of two Spaniards, for whom the doctor had ordered a cup of broth, and he had been unable to get it, so the system was explained to him by the captain. I at once told the Spaniards, who immediately wrote a supplication to the captain, which I translated and sent up to him. It luckily frightened him, and he has allowed the doctor to give what he thinks good for his patients under certain restrictions. I have remarked that the captain is more polite to me since, whereas I expected the contrary, and he lets us sleep in the rain in peace. Now we have left the rainy regions behind, and, strange to say, the air keeps cool and fresh, more so near the equator than it was off Spain. The steady and rather strong wind is the cause of this relief. During the rainy days there was scarcely any wind, and we only ran nine miles an hour, so that we were afraid there was something wrong with the engines. It now appears that the coals

they bought were of very inferior quality, and only since the fresher breeze set in do we make from ten and a quarter to eleven and a half miles an hour. Twice a week one of the oxen is killed, and one of the children, a beautiful little girl of only five years of age, claps her hands and is delighted at all the manipulations until the carcass is cut up for cooking. It is a strange contrast to see her so ferociously content (seemingly, for in reality she innocently thinks it great fun) and to hear her prattle about it, calling everything by diminutives, from the butcher himself down to the ox's tail. Her name is Jacinta (pronounced Cathinta), and it was difficult at first to guess what she meant when she said her name was 'Thinta.' She is the prettiest creature on board, and dances very nicely already in her rags, but she is exceptionally clean, luckily. I often stand for hours in the bows watching the flying-fish and the rainbow colours in the spray of the waves. As to weather and water, nothing could be more splendid, and it keeps cool, which I rather wonder at. The waves are very much smaller now than they were about Teneriffe, and new life begins after sunset, which is rather sudden, but not very much more so than at Naples. It is very beautiful, however, and is first almost without other colour than a light orange hue, but after ten minutes the same lovely rose colour we saw in Europe during the continuance of the 'remarkable sunsets' spreads till it reaches half over the sky; the pale crescent of the moon looks a light green in this rose colour, and everything reflects the strange soft light. Last week the captain found out that one of the notices for the Spanish passengers had been forgotten on shore, but the first officer found the German text, and they asked me to translate it into Spanish. As it was rather a long notice, some sixteen paragraphs of the Argentine law on emigration, I divided it into two forenoons' work, and in return was invited to dine with the officers. Though our usual fare becomes more and more disgusting by its uniformity, I did not much relish the officers' dinner either, and they were swearing at it and the cook all the time, treating the captain, who was absent, with very little respect even in my presence, so I find the spirit of discontent to be universal throughout the ship, and I should like to see what a mess they would make of it if they were in real danger.

While I was writing I heard a great row, the captain and paymaster calling the cook names, and getting paid back in the same coin. The whole disgraceful scene would be very funny if our poor

stomachs were not made to pay for it. I never thought such scenes could be possible on board a decent ship. There are some very good fellows among the boatswains and engineers, and many hunt me up, for they like to talk, as all sailors do. I was so disgusted with the fare lately that I could scarcely force myself to eat it, though I was hungry; another month of the same disgusting stuff would be enough to drive anyone wild. The sailors are also discontented, though they eat much better and more wholesome food. My friend writes at the same diminutive inkstand as myself, both lying on our stomachs in the sun, and every now and then rolling out of position; half the ink is spilt already. People now begin to miss objects, mostly stolen, but we have been careful to keep all under lock and key, and now, on nearing land, keep an alternate watch of two hours. The Spaniards have suffered most themselves, but the thieves are Spaniards without a shadow of doubt, and some have been already caught. We have enjoyed seeing Monte Video, where everything proves there are numbers of rich people. The streets look very gay with their preponderance of shops with fancy articles. When you see the prices of them you can scarcely believe so many people can live on their sale, but it is said that people here begin to spend like mad as soon as they have made money. We left Monte Video in the evening, and arrived at our destination, Buenos Ayres, on the 28th of December, very glad indeed to leave the ship for good.

## A LIFE'S MORNING.

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'DEMOS,' 'THYRZA,' ETC.

### CHAPTER XI.

#### EMILY'S DECISION.

EMILY reached home a few minutes before dinner-time. Her mother came to her from the back of the house, where things were in Saturday tumult, speaking with a voice of fretful satisfaction.

'I'd just given you up, and was wondering whether to let the meat spoil or begin dinner alone.'

'I am sorry to be late, mother.'

'No, you're not late, my dear,' the mother admitted. 'It's only that you're a little uncertain, and when one o'clock draws on I can never be quite sure of you, if you're out. I must say I like punctuality, though I dare say it's an old-fashioned kind of thing. Which would you like, potatoes baked or boiled? I've got both, as I always think the baked keep better for your father.'

'Whichever you have yourself, mother.'

'Now, child, do make a choice! As if you couldn't say which you would prefer.'

'Boiled.'

'There now, you say that because you think there won't be enough of the others. I know very well you always like the baked, when I have them. Don't you, now, Emily?'

'Mother, which you like! What *does* it matter?'

'Well, my dear, I'm sure I only wanted to please you,' said Mrs. Hood, in her tone of patience under injury. 'I can't see why you should be angry with me. If I could give you more choice I would. No doubt you're used to having potatoes done in all sorts of superior ways, but unfortunately I wasn't brought to look ask—'

The strange look with which Emily was regarding her brought her to a pause; her voice dropped.

'Mother dear,' said the girl, in a low and shaken tone, 'I am

neither foolish nor unkind ; do try to believe that. Something is troubling me. To-day let your choice be mine.'

Mrs. Hood moved away, and served the dinner in silence.

'What is your trouble, my dear?' she asked presently. 'Can't you tell me?'

Emily shook her head. Her mother relapsed into thoughtfulness, and they finished their meal with little conversation. Mrs. Hood was just rising from the table, when there was a sound of someone opening the gate before the house ; she looked to the window, and at once uttered an exclamation of astonishment.

'Well! If that isn't——! He hasn't altered a bit all these years!'

'Who is it, mother?' Emily asked nervously.

'Why, my dear, it's that man Cheeseman! The very idea of his coming here! Now, mark my words, he's come to ask for that money back again, or for some of it, at all events. It was just showing off, pretending to pay it back ; exactly like him! But if your father's foolish enough to do anything of the kind—— There, he's knocking. I hoped never to see his face again as long as I lived ; how ever he can have the impudence to come! I suppose I must let him in ; but I'm sure I shan't offer him any dinner.'

Emily had risen from her chair, and was trembling with excitement.

'Oh, yes, mother,' she cried, with a joy which astonished Mrs. Hood, 'we must behave kindly to him. He paid father the money ; we must remember that.'

'Well, you'll see if I'm not right. But I can't keep him standing at the door. Do untie this apron, Emily ; I'm so nervous, I can't get at the knot. See, now, if he hasn't come for the money back again.'

'Never mind ; he paid it! He paid it!'

'I can't understand you, child. What is there to be so pleased about?'

'Mother, do go to the door. Or shall I?'

The girl was overcome with a sudden light in utter darkness. She grasped at her mother's explanation of the visitor's arrival ; unable, in her ardour, to calculate probabilities, to review details. Dagworthy had been guilty of a base falsehood ; the man approached who could assure her of it. It was a plot, deeply planned. In some manner Dagworthy had learned what had happened to her father in Hebsworth, and had risked everything on the terror

he could inspire in her. The coming of her father's friend was salvation.

She found herself clasping his hand warmly.

'Well, Miss Hood,' Cheeseman came in exclaiming, 'you may perhaps have half a recollection of me, when you're told who I am, but I'm quite sure I shouldn't have known you. Your good father was telling me about you yesterday; rare and proud he was to speak of you, too, and not without reason, I see. Mrs. Hood, you've no need to complain of your fortune. Times have been hard, no doubt, but they've brought you a blessing. If I had a young lady such as this to look at me and call me father—well, well, it won't do to think of it.'

In spite of her determination, Mrs. Hood was mollified into an offer of dinner. Mr. Cheeseman affected to refuse, but at a word from Emily he allowed himself to be persuaded. The two sat with him, and listened to his talk of bygone days. Emily's face was flushed; she kept her eyes on Cheeseman as if his arrival were that of a long-hoped-for friend. The visitor abounded in compliments to mother and daughter alike. He ate, the while, with extreme heartiness, and at length drew from the table in the most effusive mood.

'Mrs. Hood,' he said, leaning forward, 'I owe you an apology, many apologies. You and your good husband in times long past did me a service of a very substantial kind. You thought I had forgotten it,—yes, you couldn't help but think it——'

'Oh, we won't talk about that, Mr. Cheeseman,' interposed Mrs. Hood, not without a suggestion in her tone that she had indeed entertained the thought attributed to her.

'Ah, but I can't help speaking of it,' said Cheeseman, feelingly. 'Miss Hood, you probably don't know what I refer to; you were a very little lady in those days. They were hard times with me; indeed, I've never known anything else. I was saying to your good father yesterday that he could no longer talk of his ill-luck. Many a day he and I have encouraged each other to face fortune, but that's all over for him; he's got his foot on firm ground, thank heaven! I'm still catching at straws, you see; I dare say it's a good deal my own fault; and then I never had a good wife to look after me, and a daughter growing up to teach me prudence. Well but, Miss Hood, I was saying that your father did me a great service; he lent me what was a large sum for him in those days——'



‘Not a little one even in these, Mr. Cheeseman,’ remarked Mrs. Hood.

‘Well, well, but in those times it was a thing few men in his position would have done. He lent me a ten-pound note, Miss Hood, and it’s right you should know it. Years have gone by, years, and any one would think I’d kept out of the way to avoid paying the money back. I assure you, Mrs. Hood, and to you, Miss Hood, I give my solemn word of honour, that I’ve never from that day to this had more money than would just keep me in bread and cheese and such poor clothing as this you see on me. Why, even yesterday, as no doubt your good father has told you, I had but a sixpenny piece in the world, but one coin of sixpence. Ah, you may well look sad, my good young lady. Please God, you’ll never know what that means. But one sixpence had I, and but for my old friend I should have been hard driven to find a place of rest last night. Now do I look and speak like an ungrateful man? Mrs. Hood, I’ve come here this day because I felt in duty bound to call on you, being so near. I didn’t know your address, till that meeting by chance yesterday. When my old friend left me, I got restless; I felt I must see you all again before I went south, as I hope to do—to-morrow, perhaps. I felt I must clear myself from the charge of ingratitude; I couldn’t live easy under it. It was too much like a piece of dishonesty, and that I’ve never yet been guilty of, for all I’ve gone through, and, please God, never shall. My old friend Hood and I, in days even before he had the happiness to meet you, Mrs. Hood, we used to say to each other—Let luck do its worst, we’ll live and die honest men. And, thank heaven, we’ve kept our word; for an honest man than James Hood doesn’t walk the earth, and no one ever yet brought a true charge of dishonesty against Alfred Cheeseman.’

He looked from mother to daughter. The former sat in helpless astonishment, gazing about her; Emily had hardened her face.

‘You find it a sad tale,’ Cheeseman proceeded. ‘Why, so it is, dear ladies. If ever I had owned a ten-pound note, over and above the price of a loaf of bread and a night’s lodging, it should have been put aside with the name of James Hood written on the back of it, and somehow I’d have found him out. And I say the same thing now. Don’t think, Mrs. Hood, that I’m pleading my poverty as a way of asking you to forgive the debt. The debt shall be paid; be assured of that. If I can only get to London,

'there's a prospect before me; I have a project which I explained to my old friend yesterday. You shall have the money, and, what's more, you shall have interest—four per cent. per annum. O yes, you shall. Only let me somehow get to London.'

The gate sounded again.

'Emily,' exclaimed Mrs. Hood, 'there's your father!'

She was pale, and the hand with which she pointed could not steady itself.

'Mother,' said the girl, just above her breath, 'go! He is coming in!'

Mrs. Hood rose and left the room. Cheeseman could not but observe that some strange agitation possessed them both. Possibly he explained it by the light of his own conscience. He sat, smiling at Emily rather uneasily. Then, seeing that there was likely to be a delay before Hood entered, he bent forward to speak confidentially.

'Miss Hood, I see it in your face, you're as kind and warm-hearted as your father is, and that's saying much. You won't think hardly of a poor fellow who oftener misses a dinner than gets one? Every word I've said to you's as true as the light of heaven. And my only chance is to get to London. I've made an invention, and I feel sure I know a man who will buy it of me. It took my last farthing to get here from Hebsworth. You don't think hardly of me? I don't drink, on my word I don't; it's sheer hard luck. Ah, if I had a home like this! It 'ud be like living in the garden of Eden. Well, well!'

The door opened, and Hood came in, followed by his wife. He was laughing, laughing loudly; the voice was so unlike his that this alone would have caused Emily to gaze at him in astonishment.

'So you've looked us up!' he exclaimed, holding out his hand. 'Why, you couldn't have done better; I was sorry afterwards I hadn't asked you. My wife tells me you've had dinner; you won't mind sitting by whilst I eat? And what do you think of Emily, eh? Grown a little since you saw her last—ha, ha! So you've made up your mind to go to London? Emily had dinner? Why, of course you have; I was forgetting. Baked potatoes! Remember my old weakness for them baked, Cheeseman? We used to buy 'em in the street at night, halfpenny a-piece, eh? Old man with one arm, remember? We used to hear him coming when he was half a mile off; what a voice!

And the man who sold peas; remember him? "All 'ot! All 'ot!" We were lads then, eh, Cheeseman? Emily, just a mouthful, with butter? Let me tempt you. No?—What train did you come by?'

He talked ceaselessly. There was a spot of red in the midst of each of his sallow cheeks, and his eyes gleamed with excitement. On leaving the mill a sudden thirst had come upon him, and he had quenched it with a glass of spirits at the first public-house he passed. Perhaps that had some part in his elation.

Emily almost immediately withdrew and went up to her bedroom. Here she sat alone for more than an hour, in fear lest her mother should come to the door. Then she heard the gate open, and, looking from the window, saw her father and his friend pass into the road and walk away together, the former still talking in an excited way. A minute or two later came the knock which she dreaded. She opened the door, and her mother entered.

'Emily, did you ever know your father so strange?' Mrs. Hood asked, in a tone of genuine alarm. She had sunk upon a chair, and looked to the girl as if overcome with physical weakness. 'What can it all mean? When I asked him why he had told that story about the money, he only laughed—said it was a joke, and he'd explain it all before long. I can't think where the money came from! And now he's gone to pay that man's fare to London, and no doubt to lend him more money too.'

Emily made no reply. She stood near the window, and looked out at the clouds which were breaking after a brief shower.

'Wherever the money may have come from,' pursued her mother, 'it's cruel that it should go in this way. We never wanted it worse than we do now. It's my belief he's borrowed it himself; a nice thing to borrow for one's own needs, and then throw it away on such a good-for-nothing as that.'

Emily turned and put a question quietly.

'Are you in more than usual need of money?'

'Well, my dear, you know I always try to say as little about such things as I can, but now your father's been and borrowed—as of course he must have done—there's no choice but to tell you. The house at Barnhill's going to be empty at the end of the quarter, and our rent here's going to be raised, and, all things coming together, we've had a good deal to make us anxious. It's just like your father—wanting to make me believe that things are better than they really are; it always was his way, and what's the

good of it I never could see. Of course he means it well, but he'd far better have been open about it, and have told me what he was going to do.'

Emily was shaken with agitation.

'Mother!' she exclaimed, 'why have you both insisted on keeping silence before me about your difficulties? There was no kindness in it; you have done me the cruelest wrong. Had I not money in plenty beyond what I needed? What if the future be uncertain? Has not the present its claims, and can your needs be separated from mine? Because you have succeeded in keeping me apart from the troubles of your life, you—you and father—have thought you had done a praiseworthy thing. Is it not bad enough that one human being should be indifferent to the wants of another, just because they call each other strangers? Was it right to bring such a hateful spirit of independence into a home, between parents and child? If the world is base and unjust, is not that a reason the more why we should draw ever more closely to each other, and be to each other all that our power allows? Independent! Because I earned money and could support myself, you have told me I must be independent, and leave you the same. That is the lesson that life has taught you. It is well to have understanding for lessons of a deeper kind.'

'Well, my child,' protested the mother, to whom the general tenor of such reasoning was well nigh as dark as its special application, 'we have always felt we were doing our duty to you. At your age it is only right you should have your money for yourself; who knows when you may want it? I don't think you should be angry with us, just because we've felt we'd rather put up with a little hardship now and then than have you feel some day we'd been a burden on you. I haven't complained, and I'm not complaining now. I'm sorry I came to speak to you about such a thing. It seems as if you could never take a thing as I mean it. It's like the potatoes at dinner; I meant to do you a kindness by giving you the choice, and you flew out as if you hadn't patience with me.'

Emily kept her eyes upon the window.

'How you can say,' went on Mrs. Hood, 'that we've been cruel to you and done you a wrong—I know we've very different ways of looking at most things, but where we've wronged you is more than I can understand.'

'You have taken from me,' replied Emily, without moving

her eyes, 'the power to help you. I might have done much, now I can do nothing; and your loss is mine.'

'No, indeed it isn't, and shan't be, Emily. Your father and I have always said that one thing, that you shouldn't suffer by us. What did your father always say years ago? "Emily," he said, "shall have a good education, however we stint ourselves; then, when she grows up, she'll always be able to keep herself from want, and our poverty won't matter to her." And in that, at all events, he was right, and it's come about as he said. No, Emily, we're not going to be a burden to you, so don't fear it.'

'Mother, will you let me be by myself a little? I will come down to you presently.'

'Aren't you well, my dear?' the mother asked, with a mixture of offended reserve and anxiety occasioned by the girl's voice and aspect.

'I have a headache. I will rest till tea-time.'

Mrs. Hood had for a long time been unused to tend Emily with motherly offices; like her husband, she was not seldom impressed with awe of this nature so apart from her own. That feeling possessed her now; before Emily's last words she moved away in silence and closed the door behind her gently.

The irony of fate, coming out so bitterly in all that her mother had said, was like a cold hand on Emily's heart. She sat again in the chair from which she had risen, and let her head lie back. Her vitality was at a low ebb; the movement of indignation against the cruelty which was wrecking her life had passed and left behind it a weary indifference. Happily she need not think yet. There were still some hours of respite before her; there was the night to give her strength. The daylight was a burden; it must be borne with what patience she could summon. But she longed for the time of sacred silence.

To a spirit capable of high exaltations, the hour of lassitude is a foretaste of the impotence of death. To see a purpose in the cold light of intellectual conviction, and to lack the inspiring fervour which can glorify a struggle with the obstacles nature will interpose, is to realise intensely the rugged baldness of life stripped of illusion, life as we shall see it when the end approaches and the only voice that convinces tells us that all is vanity. It is the mood known by the artist when, viewing the work complete within his mind, his heart lacks its joy and his hand is cold to execute. Self-consciousness makes of life itself a work of art.

There are the blessed moments when ardour rises in pursuit of the ideal, when it is supreme bliss to strive and overcome; and there are the times of aching languor, when the conception is still clear in every line, but the soul asks wearily—To what end? In Emily it was reaction after the eagerness of her sudden unreasoning hope. Body and mind suffered beneath a burden of dull misery. Motives seemed weak; effort was weary and unprofitable; life unutterably mean. It could scarcely be called suffering, to feel thus.

She was roused by voices below, and, immediately after, her mother came to her door again.

'Isn't it vexatious?' Mrs. Hood whispered. 'Here are Jessie and Geraldine. I'm obliged to ask them to stay tea. Do you feel well enough to come down?'

Emily went down at once, almost with a sense of relief, and presented herself to the girls very much in her usual way.

'Now I know very well you don't want us,' said Jessie, with her sprightly frankness. 'We shouldn't have thought of coming if it hadn't been that we met Mr. Hood just this side of the bridge, and he forced us to come on; he said it wouldn't be very long before he was back himself. But of course we shan't stay tea, so it's no use——'

'Oh, of course not,' put in Geraldine. 'We know Mrs. Hood's always far too busy on a Saturday afternoon. I didn't want to come; I told Jessie it would be far better to put it off till to-morrow——'

'All the same,' resumed her sister, 'she wanted to see you very much. She's got something to tell you. Now you may as well get it out and done with, Jerry; you needn't expect I'm going to help you.'

The two giggled together.

'What is it?' inquired Mrs. Hood. 'I dare say I could guess if I tried very hard. Couldn't you, Emily?'

'Now then, Jerry, for the awful news,' urged her sister.

'No, *you'll* have to tell, Jessie,' said the other, giggling and blushing.

'Well, I suppose one of us must. She's been and engaged herself to Mr. Baldwin. Of course we all knew——'

'Now, Jessie, you knew nothing of the kind!'

'Didn't I, though! Oughtn't she to be ashamed of herself, at her age, Mrs. Hood? I know what Emily's opinion is; she's simply disgusted. Look at her, and see if she isn't.'

The gabble of the two girls was worthy of the occasion ; their tongues went like mill-clappers. Whilst her mother busied herself in preparing tea, Emily sat and listened ; fortunately there was little need for her to talk. To herself she seemed to be suffering a kind of trance, without detriment to her consciousness. The chattering and grimacing girls appeared before her as grotesque unrealities, puppets animated in some marvellous way, and set to caricature humanity. She tried to realise that one of them was a woman like herself, who had just consented to be a man's wife ; but it was impossible to her to regard this as anything but an aping of things which at other times had a solemn meaning. She found herself gazing at Geraldine as one does at some singular piece of mechanism with a frivolous purpose. And it was not only the individuals that impressed her thus ; these two represented life and the world. She had strange, cynical thoughts, imaginings which revolted her pure mind even whilst it entertained them. No endeavour would shake off this ghastly clairvoyance. She was picturing the scene of Geraldine's acceptance of the offer of marriage ; then her thoughts passed on to the early days of wedded life. She rose, shuddering, and moved about the room ; she talked to drive those images from her brain. It did but transfer the sense of unreality to her own being. Where was she, and what doing ? Had she not dreamed that a hideous choice had been set before her, a choice from which there was no escape, and which, whatever the alternative she accepted, would blast her life ? But that was something grave, earnest, and what place was there for either earnestness or gravity in a world where Geraldine represented womanhood wooed and about to be wedded ? There was but one way of stopping the gabble which was driving her frantic ; she threw open the piano and began to play, to play the first music that came into her mind. It was a passage from the Moonlight Sonata. A few moments, and the ghosts were laid. The girls still whispered together, but above their voices the pure stream of music flowed with gracious oblivion. When Emily ceased, it was with an inward fervour of gratitude to the master and the instrument. To know that, was to have caught once more the point of view from which life had meaning. Now let them chatter and mop and mow ; the echo of that music still lived around.

Hood had not returned when they sat down to tea. Jessie began to ask questions about the strange-looking man they had met in company with him, but Mrs. Hood turned the conversation.



'I suppose you'll be coming with the same tale next, Jessie,' she said, with reference to Geraldine.

'Me, Mrs. Hood? No, indeed; I haven't had lessons from Emily for nothing. It's all very well for empty-headed chits like Jerry here, but I've got serious things to attend to. I'm like Emily, she and I are never going to be married.'

'Emily never going to be married?' exclaimed Mrs. Hood, half seriously. 'Ah, you mustn't believe all Emily tells you.'

'Oh, she hasn't told me that herself, but I'm quite sure she would be offended if anyone thought her capable of such frivolity.'

'Emily will keep it to herself till the wedding-day,' said Geraldine, with a mocking shake of the head. 'She isn't one to go telling her secrets.'

At this point Hood made his appearance. His wife paid no heed to him as he entered; Emily glanced at him furtively. He had the look of a man who has predetermined an attitude of easy good humour, nor had the parting with Cheeseman failed to prove an occasion for fresh recourse to that fiery adjuvant which of a sudden was become indispensable to him. Want of taste for liquor and life-long habit of abstemiousness had hitherto kept Hood the soberest of men; he could not remember to have felt the warm solace of a draught taken for solace' sake since the days when Cheeseman had been wont to insist upon the glass of gin at their meetings, and then it had never gone beyond the single glass, for he felt that his head was weak, and dreaded temptation. Four-and-twenty hours had wrought such a change in him, that already to enter a public-house seemed a familiar act, and he calculated upon the courage to be begotten of a smoking tumbler. Previously the mere outlay would have made him miserable, but the command of unearned coin was affecting him as it is wont to affect poor men. The new aid given to Cheeseman left a few shillings out of the second broken sovereign. Let the two pounds—he said to himself—be regarded as gone; eight remained untouched. For the odd shillings, let them serve odd expenses. So when he had purchased Cheeseman's ticket to King's Cross, he was free with small change at the station bar. At the last moment it occurred to him that he might save himself a walk by going in the train as far as Pental. So it was here that the final parting had taken place.

He seated himself with his legs across a chair, and began to talk to Geraldine of the interesting news which Jessie had just

whispered to him when they met on the road. The character of his remarks was not quite what it would have been a day or two ago; he joked with more freedom than was his custom. Studiously he avoided the eyes of his wife and daughter. He declined to sit up to the table, but drank a cup of tea with his hands resting on the back of the chair.

The Cartwright sisters were anxious to use the evening for a visit to certain other friends; shortly after six o'clock they took their departure. While Emily and Mrs. Hood were seeing them away at the door, Hood went upstairs to his laboratory.

'Emily, come here,' Mrs. Hood said, with anxious earnestness, leading the way back into the sitting-room. And, when the door was closed——

'My dear, what *is* the matter with him? Don't you notice his strangeness?'

'Yes, mother, I do.'

'Can he have—— It's a thing he never does! You know what I mean? That Cheeseman has been taking him to a public-house; I am sure of it.'

Emily had had no such thought. To her a squalid horror clung about the suggestion. To picture her father in such circumstances was to realise a fresh fall into degradation, no doubt the inevitable consequence of that she already knew of. There was a painful stricture at her heart; a cry of despair all but found utterance.

Her father's voice was calling from the stair-head—'Emily!' She darted to the door in momentary terror and replied.

'Will you come up?' Hood said; 'I want you.'

She ascended to the garret. Hood was standing with his back to the little window, so that his face was shadowed. Emily moved to the table, and, with her hands resting upon it, her eyes bent, stood waiting.

'Emily,' he began, still with a remnant of artificial pleasantry, though his voice was not entirely under control, 'I want to explain that money-matter to you. It doesn't look well; I am a good deal ashamed of myself; if I was a boy I should deserve a whipping for telling a fib, shouldn't I?'

It was impossible to make reply to such words.

'The truth is this,' he went on more nervously; 'we've been in a little difficulty, your mother and I, that we didn't see any good in troubling you about. In fact, there's a raising of rent,

and one or two other little things. When I was in Hebsworth yesterday I had an opportunity of borrowing ten pounds, and I thought it better to do so. Then I met Cheeseman, and it was his mention of the debt put into my head the stupid thought of trying to spare your mother anxiety. Of course such tricks never succeed; I might have known it. But there, that's the truth of the matter, and I'm easier now—now I've told it.'

Her heart bled for him, so dreadful to her ears was the choking of his voice upon the last words. At the same time she was hot with anguish of shame. He stood before her a wretched culprit, hiding his guilt with lie upon lie; he, her father, whom she had revered so, had compassionated so, whom she loved despairingly. She could not raise her head; she could not speak. She longed to spring to him and hold him in her arms, but other thoughts paralysed the impulse. Had there lain nothing in the background, had his falsehood, his weakness, been all, she could have comforted and strengthened him with pure pity and love. But the consciousness of what was before her killed her power to stead him in his misery. She could not speak out her very thought, and to palter with solemn words was impossible. Hypocrisy from her to him at this moment—hypocrisy, however coloured with sincere feeling, would have sunk her in her own eyes beyond redemption.

'Let us speak no more of it, father,' she replied without raising her head.

He was sober enough now, and in her voice, her attitude, he read his hopeless condemnation. Between him and this high-hearted woman had come that which would never be removed; before her he was shamed to eternity. Never again could he speak with her of truth, of justice, of noble aims; the words would mock him. Never again could he take her kiss upon his lips without shrinking. Her way henceforth lay ever further from his own. What part had she in a life become so base? What place had she under a roof dishonoured? If some day she wedded, his existence would be to her a secret shame. For—worst thought of all—it was whispered to his conscience that she did not credit even what he now told her. He seemed to himself to have betrayed the second untruth by his way of speaking it. In the silence which followed upon her words he heard promptings of despair. How could he live in her presence from day to day, not daring to meet her eyes? He looked back upon the years

behind him, and they seemed to overflow with peaceful happiness. Irretrievable, his yielding and his shame; irrecoverable, the conscious rectitude bartered so cheaply. He saw now that his life had held vast blessings, and they were for ever lost.

Emily was speaking.

‘Do you wish to stay here this evening, father?’

‘No,’ he answered hastily, ‘I only called you up for—for that.’

Her heart reproached her with cruelty, but what remained save to leave him to himself? They could not face each other, could not exchange a natural word.

‘Emily!’

She turned at the door. He had called her, but did not continue to speak.

‘Yes, father?’

‘It’s only for to-night. You’ll—you’ll sit with me again as usual?’

‘Oh, I hope so!’

A rush of tears had its way as she closed the door, something so deeply pathetic had there been in that appeal. It was the first time that her misery had found this outlet; unable to calm herself at once, she turned aside into her bedroom. Tears did not come to her readily; indeed, it was years since she had shed them; the fit shook her with physical suffering. The weeping would not stay itself, and to force her sobs into silence was almost beyond her power. She flung herself desperately by the bedside, throwing out her arms in the effort to free her chest from its anguishing constraint.

In an hour she went down. Her mother was sitting miserably in the kitchen, and Emily, dreading to have to talk again, kept apart in the parlour. When it began to dusk, Hood descended and supper was prepared for in the usual way. There was small pretence of conversation, and, as soon as possible, Emily bade her parents good-night. It was long before she heard them go to their room; they whispered together in passing her door.

And now the solemn hours shed about her guardian silence, and she could listen to the voice of her soul. It was incredible that the morning of the day which was not yet dead had witnessed that scene between her and Dagworthy on the Castle Hill; long spaces of featureless misery seem to stretch between. Perforce she had overborne reflection; one torment coming upon

another had occupied her with mere endurance ; it was as though a ruthless hand tore from her shred after shred of the fair garment in which she had joyed to clothe herself, while a voice mockingly bade her be in congruence with the sordid shows of the world around. For a moment, whilst Beethoven sang to her, she knew the light of faith ; but the dull mist crept up again and thickened. Weeping had not eased her bosom ; she had only become more conscious of the load of tears surcharging it. Now she lay upon her bed in the darkness, hushing idle echoes of day, waiting upon the spirit that ever yet had comforted and guided her.

What, divested of all horror due to imagination, was the threat to which her life lay subject ? Dagworthy had it in his power to ruin her father, to blast his remaining years with a desolation to which the life-long struggle with poverty would be the mere pleasantry of fate. She could no longer entertain a doubt of the guilt the first suggestion of which excited her scornful laughter, and she knew it to be more than probable that her father had yielded to temptation purposely put in his way. She was not unconscious of the power of reprisal which so gross a plot put into her hands, though it was true that the secrecy Dagworthy had maintained in his intercourse with her left but her bare assertion for evidence against him. Yet the thought was profitless. Suppose he did not venture to prosecute on the charge of theft, none the less could he work the ruin he menaced ; mere dismissal from his employment, with mention of the cause to this and the other person, was all that was needed to render the wretched clerk an outcast, hopeless of future means of livelihood, for ever disgraced in the eyes of all who knew him. She felt the cruelty of which this man, whose passions she had so frenzied, was readily capable. She believed he would not spare her an item of suffering which it was in his power to inflict. She knew that appeal to him was worse than useless, for it was only too clear that for her to approach him was to inflame his resolution. Her instinctive fear of him was terribly justified.

With her alone, then, it lay to save her parents from the most dreadful fate that could befall them, from infamy, from destitution, from despair. For, even if her father escaped imprisonment, it would be impossible for him to live on in Dunfield, and how, at his age, was a new life to be begun ? And it was idle to expect that the last degradation would be spared him ; his

disgrace would involve her; Dagworthy's jealousy would not neglect such a means of striking at her engagement. And Wilfrid must needs know; to Emily not even the possibility of hiding such a thing from him suggested itself. Could she become his wife with that stigma upon her, bringing as dowry her beggared parents for him to support?

Did it mean that? Was this the thought that she had dreaded to face throughout the day? Was it not only her father whose ruin was involved, and must she too bid farewell to hope?

She let those ghastly eyes stare from the darkness into her own, and tried to exhaust their horror. It overtaxed her courage; with a smothered cry of fear she sprang upright, and her shaking hands struck a flame to bring light into the room. Not once, but again and again, did the chill of terror pass through her whole frame. She caught a passing glimpse of her image in the glass, and was fascinated into regarding it closely. 'You, who stand there in the pitiless night'—thus did thought speak within her—'you, poor human thing, with the death-white face and eyes, staring in all but distraction, is this the very end of the rapturous dream which has lulled you whilst destiny wrought your woe? Is it even now too late to struggle? Is this the wild sorrow of farewell to love, the beginning of an anguish which shall torture your soul to death? Have you lost *him*?' For moments it was as though life fought with the last and invincible enemy. On the spot where she had been standing she sank powerless to her knees, clinging to the nearest object, her head falling back.

The clock outside her door struck one; how long the dull vibration seemed to endure. She was conscious of it, though lying with all but palsied faculties. It was the first of the divisions which marked her long vigil; the hours succeeded each other quickly; between voice and voice there seemed to pass but a single wave of surging thought. But each new warning of coming day found her nearer the calm of resolve.

Look at this girl, and try to know her. Emily knew but one article of religion, and that bade her preserve, if need be, at the cost of life, the purity of her soul. This was the supreme law of her being. The pieties of kindred were as strong in her as in any heart that ever beat, but respect for them could not constrain her to a course which opposed that higher injunction. Growing with her growth, nourished by the substance which developed her intellectual force, a sense of all that was involved in her woman-

hood had come to be the guiding principle of her existence. Imagine the great artist Nature bent upon the creation of a soul which should hold in subtlest perfection of consciousness every element essential to the successive ideals of maiden, wife, mother, and the soul of this girl is pictured. Her religion of beauty was the symbolic expression of instincts wholly chaste; her body was to her a temple which preserved a sacred flame, and she could not conceive existence if once the shrine had suffered desecration. We are apt to attribute to women indiscriminately at least the outlines of this consciousness; for the vast majority it confuses itself with the prescriptions of a traditional dogma, if not with the mere prejudice of social usage. For Emily no external dogma existed, and the tenor of her life had aided her in attaining independence of ignoble dictation. Her views were often strangely at variance with those of the social tribunal which sits in judgment on virtue and vice. To her, for instance, the woman who sells herself with ecclesiastical sanction differed only in degree of impurity from her whose track is under the street-lamps. She was not censorious, she was not self-righteous; she spoke to no one of the convictions that ruled her, and to herself held them a mystery of holiness, a revelation of high things vouchsafed she knew not whence nor how. Suppose her to have been heart-free at this juncture of her fate, think you she would have found it a whit less impossible to save her father by becoming Dagworthy's wife? There was in her thought but one parallel to this dire choice which lay before her: it was the means offered to Isabel of rescuing her brother Claudio. That passion of purity which fired Isabel's speech was the breath of Emily's life. She knew well that many, and women too, would spare no condemnation of what they would call her heartless selfishness; she knew that the paltriest considerations of worldly estate are deemed sufficient to exact from a woman the sacrifice now demanded of her. That was no law to Emily. The moral sense which her own nature had developed must here alone control her. Purity, as she understood it—the immaculate beauty of the soul—was her religion: if other women would die rather than deny the object of their worship, to her the ideal of chastity was worth no less perfect a zeal. Far removed from the world which theorises, she presented in her character a solution of the difficulties entertained by those who doubtfully seek a substitute for the old religious sanctions. Her motives had the simplicity of elemental faith;



they were indeed but the primary instincts of womanhood exalted to a rare perfection and reflected in a consciousness of exceeding lucidity.

The awakening of love in such a nature as this was, as it were, the admission to a supreme sacrament. Here was the final sanction of the creed that had grown from within. In the plighting of her troth to Wilfrid Athel, Emily had, as she herself saw it, performed the most solemn and sacred act of her life; instead of being a mere preliminary to a holy observance which should in truth unite them, it made that later formality all but trivial. It was the aspiration of her devoutest hours that this interchange of loving promise might keep its binding sanctity for ever, that no touch of mutability might come upon her heart till the last coldness stayed its beating. A second love appeared to her self-contradicted; to transfer to another those thoughts which had wedded her soul to Wilfrid's would not merely be sin, it was an impossibility. Did he ever cease to cherish her—a thought at which she smiled in her proud confidence—that could in nothing affect her love for him, which was not otherwise to be expressed than as the sum of her consciousness. . . .

The pale light of dawn began to glimmer through the window-blind. Emily gave it full admission, and looked out at the morning sky; faintest blue was growing between streaks of cold grey. Her eyes ached from the fixedness of intense thought; the sweet broad brow was marble, the disorder of her hair spoke of self-abandonment in anguish. She had no thought of seeking rest; very far from her was sleep and the blessedness of oblivion. She felt as though sleep would never come again.

But she knew what lay before her; doubt was gone, and there only remained fear to shake her heart. A day and a night had to be lived through before she could know her fate, so long must she suffer things not to be uttered. A day and a night, and then, perchance—nay, certainly—the vanguard of a vast army of pain-stricken hours. There was no passion now in her thought of Wilfrid; her love had become the sternness of resolve which dreads itself. An hour ago her heart had been pierced with self-pity in thinking that she should suffer thus so far away from him, without the possibility of his aid, her suffering undreamt by him. Now, in her reviving strength, she had something of the martyr's joy. If the worst came, if she had spoken to him her last word of tenderness, the more reason that her soul should keep un-

sullied the image of that bliss which was the crown of life. His and his only, his in the rapture of ideal love, his whilst her tongue could speak, her heart conceive, his name.

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## CHAPTER XII.

## THE FINAL INTERVIEW.

ON six days of the week, Mrs. Hood, to do her justice, made no show of piety to the powers whose ordering of life her tongue incessantly accused; if her mode of Sabbatical observance was bitter, the explanation was to be sought in the mere force of habit dating from childhood, and had, indeed, a pathetic significance to one sufficiently disengaged from the sphere of her acerbity to be able to judge fairly such manifestations of character. A rigid veto upon all things secular, a preoccupied severity of visage, a way of speaking which suggested difficult tolerance of injury, an ostentation of discomfort in bodily inactivity—these were but traditions of happier times; to keep her Sunday thus was to remind herself of days when the outward functions of respectability did in truth correspond to self-respect; and it is probable that often enough, poor woman, the bitterness was not only on her face. As a young girl in her mother's home she had learnt that the Christian Sabbath was to be distinguished by absence of joy, and as she sat through these interminable afternoons, on her lap a sour little book which she did not read, the easy chair abandoned for one which hurt her back, the very cat not allowed to enter the room lest it should gambol, here on the verge of years which touch the head with grey, her life must have seemed to her a weary pilgrimage to a goal of discontent. How far away was girlish laughter, how far the blossoming of hope which should attain no fruitage, and, alas, how far the warm season of the heart, the woman's heart that loved and trusted, that joyed in a new-born babe, and thought not of the day when the babe, in growing to womanhood, should have journeyed such lengths upon a road where the mother might not follow.

Neither Hood nor his daughter went to church; the former generally spent the morning in his garret, the latter helped herself against the depression which the consciousness of the day

engendered by playing music which respect would have compelled her to refrain from had her mother been present. The music was occasionally heard by an acquaintance who for some reason happened to be abroad in church time, and Mrs. Hood was duly informed of the sad things done in her absence, but she had the good sense to forbid herself interference with Emily's mode of spending the Sunday. She could not understand it, but her husband's indifference to religion had taught her to endure, and, in truth, her own zeal, as I have said, was not of active colour. Discussion on such subjects there had never been. Her daughter, she had learnt to concede, was strangely other than herself; Emily was old enough to have regard for her own hereafter.

Breakfast on Sunday was an hour later than on other days, and was always a very silent meal. On the day which we have now reached it was perhaps more silent than usual. Hood had a newspaper before him on the table; his wife wore the wonted Sabbath absentness, suggestive of a fear lest she should be late for church; Emily made a show of eating, but the same diminutive slice of bread and butter lasted her to the end of the meal. She was suffering from a slight feverishness, and her eyes, unclosed throughout the night, were heavy with a pressure which was not of conscious fatigue. Having helped in clearing the table and ordering the kitchen, she was going upstairs when her mother spoke to her for the first time.

'I see you've still got your headache,' Mrs. Hood said, with plaintiveness which was not condolence.

'I shall go out a little, before dinner-time,' was the reply.

Her mother dismally admitted the wisdom of the proposal, and Emily went to her room. Before long the bell of the chapel-of-ease opposite began its summoning, a single querulous bell, jerked with irregular rapidity. The bells of Pandal church sent forth a more kindly bidding, but their music was marred by the harsh clanging so near at hand. Emily heard and did not hear. When she had done housemaid's office in her room, she sat propping her hot brows, waiting for her mother's descent in readiness for church. At the sound of the opening and closing bedroom door, she rose and accompanied her mother to the parlour. Mrs. Hood was in her usual nervous hurry, giving a survey to each room before departure, uttering a hasty word or two, then away with constricted features.

The girl ascended again, and, as soon as the chapel bell had

ceased its last notes of ill-tempered iteration, began to attire herself hastily for walking. When ready, she unlocked a drawer and took from it an envelope, of heavy contents, which lay ready to her hand. Then she paused for a moment and listened. Above there was a light footfall, passing constantly hither and thither. Leaving the room with caution, she passed downstairs noiselessly and quitted the house by the back door, whence by a circuit she gained the road. Her walk was towards the Heath. As soon as she entered upon it, she proceeded rapidly—so rapidly, indeed, that before long she had to check herself and take breath. No sun shone, and the air was very still and warm; to her it seemed oppressive. Over Dunfield hung a vast pile of purple cloud, against which the wreaths of mill smoke, slighter than on week-days, lay with a dead whiteness. The Heath was solitary; a rabbit now and then started from a brake, and here and there grazed sheep. Emily had her eyes upon the ground, save when she looked rapidly ahead to measure the upward distance she had still to toil over.

On reaching the quarry, she stayed her feet. The speed at which she had come, and an agitation which was increasing made breathing so difficult that she turned a few paces aside, and sat down upon a rough block of stone, long since quarried and left unused. Just before her was a small patch of marshy ground, long grass growing about a little pool. A rook had alighted on the margin, and was pecking about. Presently it rose on its heavy wings; she watched it flap athwart the dun sky. Then her eye fell on a little yellow flower near her feet, a flower she did not know. She plucked and examined it, then let it drop carelessly from her hand.

The air was growing brown; a storm threatened. She looked about her with a hasty fear, then resumed her walk to the upper part of the Heath. Reaching the smooth sward, she made straight across it for Dagworthy's house.

Crossing the garden, she was just at the front door, when it was opened, and by Dagworthy himself. His eyes fell before her.

'Will you come this way?' he said, indistinctly.

He led into the large sitting-room where he had previously entertained Emily and her father. As soon as he had closed the door, he took eager steps towards her.

'You have come,' he said. 'Something told me you would come this morning. I've watched at the window for you.'

The assurance of victory had softened him. His voice was like that of one who greets a loving mistress. His gaze clung to her.

'I have come to bring you this!' Emily replied, putting upon the table the heavy envelope. 'It is the money we owe you.'

Dagworthy laughed, but his eyes were gathering trouble.

'You owe me nothing,' he said, affecting easiness.

'How do you mean that?'—Emily gave him a direct look. Her manner had now nothing of fear, nor even the diffidence with which she had formerly addressed him. She spoke with a certain remoteness, as if her business with him were formal. The lines of her mouth were hard; her heavy lids only half raised themselves.

'I mean that you owe nothing of this kind,' he answered, rather confusedly. His confidence was less marked; her look overcame his.

'Not ten pounds?'

'Well, *you* don't.' He added, 'Whose is this money?'

'It is my own; I have earned it.'

'Does your father know you are paying it?'

'He does not. I was not likely to speak to him of what you told me. There is the debt, Mr. Dagworthy; we have paid it, and now I will leave you.'

He examined her. Even yet he could not be sure that he understood. In admitting her, he had taken it for granted that she could come with but one purpose. It was but the confirmation of the certain hope in which he had lived through the night. Was the girl a simpleton? Had she got it into her head that repayment in this way discharged his hold upon her father? It was possible; women are so ludicrously ignorant of affairs. He smiled, though darkly.

'Why have you brought this money?' he asked.

She was already moving nearer to the door. He put himself in her way.

'What good do you imagine this is?'

'None, perhaps. I pay it because I wish to.'

'And—is it your notion that this puts your father straight? Do you think this is a way out of his difficulty?'

'I have not thought that. But it was only to restore the money that I came.'

There was silence.

'Have you forgotten,' he asked, half wonderingly, half with quiet menace, 'what I said to you yesterday?'

'You see my answer,' said Emily, pointing hastily to the table. 'I owe you that, but I can give you nothing more.' Her voice quivered, as she continued, 'What you said to me yesterday was said without thought, or only with evil thoughts. Since then you have had hours of reflection. It is not in your power—it would be in the power of no man who is not utterly base and wicked—to repeat such words this morning. Mr. Dagworthy, I believe in the affection you have professed for me; feeling that, you are incapable of dastardly cruelty. I will not believe your tongue against yourself. In a moment of self-forgetfulness you spoke words which you will regret through your life, for they were inhuman, and were spoken to a defenceless girl. After hearing them, I cannot beg your mercy for my father; but you know that misfortune which strikes him falls also upon me. You have done me the greatest wrong that man can do to woman; you owe me what reparation is in your power.'

She had not thought to speak thus. Since daylight dawned her heart had felt too numb, too dead; barely to tell him that she had no answer to his words was the purpose with which she had set out. The moment prompted her utterance, and words came without reflection. It was a noble speech, and nobly delivered; the voice was uncertain at times, but it betrayed no weakness of resolve, no dread of what might follow. The last sentences were spoken with a dignity which rebuked rather than supplicated. Dagworthy's head bowed as he listened.

He came nearer.

'Do you think me,' he asked, under his breath, 'a mere ignorant lout, who has to be shamed before he knows what's manly and what isn't? Do you think because I'm a manufacturer, and the son of one, that I've no thought or feeling above my trade? I know as well as you can tell me, though you speak with words I couldn't command, that I'm doing a mean and a vile thing—there; hear me say it, Emily Hood. But it's not a cruel thing. I want to compel you to do what, in a few years, you'll be glad of. I want you to accept love such as no other man can give you, and with it the command of pretty well everything you can wish for. I want to be a slave at your feet, with no other work in life than finding out your desires and satisfying them. You're not to be tempted with money, and I don't try to; but I value

the money because it will give me power to show my love. And mind what I say ; ask yourself if it isn't true. If you hadn't been engaged already, you'd have listened to me ; I feel that power in myself ; I know I should have made you care for me by loving you as desperately as I do. I wouldn't have let you refuse me, —you hear, Emily ? Emily ! Emily ! Emily !— it does me good to call you by your name—I haven't done so before to-day, have I, Emily ? Not a cruel thing, because I offer you more than any man living can, more of that for which you care most, the life a highly educated woman can appreciate. You shall travel where you will ; you shall buy books and pictures, and all else to your heart's content ; and, after all, you shall love me. That's a bold word, but I tell you I feel the power in me to win your love. I'm not hateful to you, even now ; you can't really despise me, for you know that whatever I do is for no mean purpose. There is no woman living like you, and to make you my wife I am prepared to do anything, however vile it seems. Some day you'll forgive it all, because some day you'll love me !'

It was speaking as he had never yet done. He assumed that his end was won, and something of the triumph of passion ended his words with a joyous fervour. Very possibly there was truth in much that he said, for he spoke with the intense conviction which fulfils prophecies. But the only effect was to force Emily back upon her cold defiance.

'I am in your house, Mr. Dagworthy,' she said, 'and you can compel me to hear whatever you choose to say. But I have no other answer than that you know. I wish to leave you.'

His flushed eagerness could not at once adapt itself to another tone.

'No, you don't wish to leave me. You want to see that I am a man of my word, that I mean what I say, and am not afraid to stick to it. Emily, you don't leave me till you have promised to be my wife. You're a noble girl. You wouldn't be frightened into yielding. And it isn't that way I want to have you. You're more now in my eyes than ever. It shall be love for love. Emily, you will marry me ?'

What resources of passion the man was exhibiting ! By forethought he could have devised no word of these speeches which he uttered with such vigour ; it was not he who spoke but the very Love God within him. He asked the last question with a voice subdued in tenderness ; his eyes had a softer fire.



Emily gave her answer.

'I would not marry you, though you stood to kill me if I refused.'

No bravado, no unmeasured vehemence of tone, but spoken as it would have been had the very weapon of death gleamed in his hand.

He knew that this was final.

'So you are willing that your father shall be put into the dock at the police-court to-morrow morning?'

'If you can do that, it must be so.'

'If I *can*? You know very well I have the power to, and you ought to know by now that I stick at nothing. Go home and think about it.'

'It is useless. I have thought. If you think still to make me yield by this fear, it is better that you should act at once. I will tell you: If I were free, if I had the power to give myself to you in marriage, it would make your threat of no more avail. I love my father; to you I cannot say more than that; but though I would give my life to save his from ruin, I could not give—my father would not wish me, O never!—my woman's honour. You will find it hard to understand me, for you seem not to know the meaning of such words.'

She closed with stern bitterness, compelled to it by the tone of his last bidding. A glorious beauty flashed in her face. Alas, Wilfrid Athel would never know the pride of seeing thus the woman he knew so noble. But Wilfrid was in her heart; his soul allied itself with hers and gave her double strength. Dagworthy had wrought for her that which in the night's conflict she could not bring about by her own force; knowing, in the face of utter despair, the whole depth of the love with which she held to her father, she could yet speak his doom with calmness, with clear intelligence that the sacrifice she was asked to make was disproportionate to the disaster threatened.

He answered with cold decision.

'It's you who don't know me. I've nothing more to say to you; you are at liberty to go. To-morrow your father will be before the magistrates.'

Emily moved to the door. The sound of the words had blanched her lips. She felt that, if she would keep hold upon her bodily strength she must breathe the outer air.

‘Look here, I say,’ he exclaimed, stepping to the table. ‘Take the money. I’ve nothing to do with that.’

She made a motion with her hand, but hastened still and escaped. Once in the garden she all but ran, thinking she heard his footsteps in pursuit, and smitten with that sudden terror which comes sometimes when a danger is escaped. But she had gained the Heath, and it was certain now that he had not tried to overtake her, a glance back showed her that no one was in sight. She walked rapidly on, though her heart seemed about to burst, walked without pausing till she had reached the quarry. Here she sat on the same stone as before. She was in dread of fainting; the anguish of her leaping blood was intolerable; she had neither sight nor hearing. But the crisis of suffering passed; she let her head fall forward and buried it upon her lap.

Perhaps for ten minutes she remained thus, then a great crash from the near heavens caused her to look up. It was raining, had rained since she sat there, though she had not known it. In the little pool before her great drops splashed and made a miniature tempest. The yellow flower she had plucked lay close by, and was beaten by the rain. It lightened vividly, and there followed heavier thunder than before.

She wished to shed tears—tears were choking her, but would not rise and shed themselves; she could only sob, aloud, hysterically. The words ‘Father’ and ‘Wilfrid’ broke from her lips several times. Was there red-hot metal poured upon her forehead?

It cost her a great effort to rise and walk homewards. The rain streamed down, but she could no longer hasten. Still she reached the house before her mother’s return from church, and she was glad of that.

*(To be continued.)*

